



# TO THE STUDENTS

BY  
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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

It is generally acknowledged that Gandhiji was a great educationist and that he has made a revolutionary contribution to educational thought. It is perhaps not equally generally known that he had a deep and abiding interest in the welfare of the student community. It is hard to define but there was something in him which drew students to him individually and collectively. Wherever he went students unfailingly requested him to address them. He too was sure to find some time for them. Innumerable students from all over India used to write to him asking for advice and guidance in their various perplexities. He sent them replies and often when he thought the question addressed to him touched the whole community of students dealt with it in the *Young India* and later in the *Harijan*.

All these addresses and writings together form valuable literature which can be of help and guidance to individual students and students as a class.

In a well ordered society students should get all the guidance they need in their student life either from their parents or at least from their teachers. Even when such an order comes into existence words of men like Gandhiji should be available to the young developing minds.

In this volume are collected all the important writings and utterances of Gandhiji which would be of immense help to all classes of students as an infallible guide in questions which baffle the growing adult mind.

9-9-'49



## INTRODUCTION

Gandhiji's connection with the student world dates back to a fairly early time. While conducting the Satyagraha campaign in South Africa, he founded the Tolstoy Farm near Johannesburg in 1910 where Satyagrahis used to practise a sort of Spartan life. It was during this period that Gandhiji had to undertake some responsibility in connection with what is more formally known as the 'education' of the young boys and girls in his charge. As Gandhiji's adventures into educational field thus began under the exigencies of a new kind of life, his entire philosophy of education, as well as his ideas about the duty of students were moulded to a considerable extent by the prevailing atmosphere of non-violent war and by his very unorthodox approach.

Morality being one of the keystones of Gandhiji's life, he has always tried to impress upon the student world the need of practising the art of self-control. He has never been tired of preaching the gospel of *brahmacharya*, without which, he thought, no man could really turn himself into an effective servant of mankind. In fact, he once wrote that although he had personally been a conscientious worker, he could clearly recall the fact that indulgence interfered with his work. It was the consciousness of this limitation that put him on the track of self-restraint. His argument was that 'a man whose activities are wholly consecrated to the realization of Truth, which requires utter selflessness, can have no time for the selfish purpose of begetting children and running a household. (From *Yeravda Mandir*, p. 17). But this insistence upon continence frequently brought Gandhiji in conflict with those who held a different view on the subject. Yet he carried on his battle on behalf of the puritanical code with unabated enthusiasm, like the doughty warrior that he was.

The central thing which he however tried to impress upon his young audiences was that they should always keep before their mind's eye, their supreme social responsibility. Students are a part of society, whose educational expenses are met, not

by the labour of the students, but by society at large. And in a poor country like ours, the burden naturally falls upon the millions of exploited and neglected residents of the villages. The latter are relegated to darkness of mind as well as of body. Therefore, the first duty of the student world should be, not to treat their period of study as one of opportunity for indulgence in intellectual luxuries, but for preparing themselves for final dedication in the service of those on whose backs they happen to be riding today. One humble and straightforward way of discharging the debt was to learn some craft even while they were at their studies ; and by means of the product of their labours to pay for as much of their tuition expenses as possible. If education could thus be made to pay for itself, it would go a long way to make possible its diffusion in rural India where it is often held up for want of the necessary finances.

Gandhiji also advised students to form a living contact with the villagers in whose midst their institution happened to be located. Students had not merely to undertake sympathetic research about their economic and social disabilities, but, at the same time, do something positive so that the life of the villagers might be raised to a higher material and moral level. To this end, Gandhiji expected students to take to the spinning wheel with understanding and enthusiasm, looking upon it as a symbol of union between themselves and the toiling millions of the world over.

After having established the union through common productive labour, students were further expected to drive out illiteracy, spread ideas about sanitation and hygiene and the like. They were also to take a lead in matters of social reform, such as the eradication of pernicious practices like the dowry system or of the cruel custom of untouchability.

But above and beyond these, students in a subjugated country like ours had a more urgent responsibility in connection with the political liberation of the land. Many students sought Gandhiji's advice in this respect. He wished all of them to develop a rational attitude, listen to every one, learn to discriminate the chaff from the grain, and, on the whole, to steer clear from what is known as 'party' or 'power' politics. They were to remain true to their calling, obeying the discipline of

the institution, except where it came in conflict with their fundamental moral ideals. In times of general national upheaval they were to lay down their books and serve as soldiers in the campaign. At moments when the whole house was on fire, everybody was expected to take up a bucket of water and lend his helping hand to the immediate task ahead. Gandhiji expected, at times, that the student community should play the part of pioneers, just as they had done in a country like China. During the national struggle, the battlefield itself was to serve as the richest school of experience.

In short, Gandhiji thus uniformly tried to lead the student world along the path of dedicated service and progressive identification with the exploited for the purpose of serving and lifting them up from the mire. This was the highest aim of life, and the highest purpose of education was also to prepare the student for fulfilling this heavy responsibility when he grew up to manhood.

The following articles or extracts from Gandhiji's speeches and writings have been arranged chronologically, and he who goes through the collection carefully, will not fail to be impressed by the wide range of social duties and the lofty idealism which Gandhiji prescribed for the student world. No social or political problem was too high for them, and there was also no toning down of the demand which he made upon their sense of dedication to the cause of the poor.

May the student world of India prove true to the hope and the confidence which Gandhiji reposed in them during his lifetime.

Calcutta, 4-4-'48

Nirmalkumar Bose

## TO STUDENTS

I have always cultivated close contact with them (the students). They know me and I know them. They have given me service. Many ex-collegians are my esteemed co-workers. I know that they are the hope of the future. In the heyday of non-cooperation they were invited to leave their schools and colleges. Some professors and students who responded to the Congress call have remained steadfast and gained much for the country and themselves. The call has not been repeated for there is not the atmosphere for it. But experience has shown that the lure of the current education, though it is false and unnatural, is too much for the youth of the country. College education provides a career. It is a passport for entrance to the charmed circle. Pardonable hunger for knowledge cannot be satisfied otherwise than by going through the usual rut. They do not mind the waste of precious years in acquiring knowledge of an utterly foreign language which takes the place of the mother tongue. The sin of it is never felt. They and their teachers have made up their minds that the indigenous languages are useless for gaining access to modern thought and the modern sciences. I wonder how the Japanese are faring. For, their education, I understand, is all given in Japanese. The Chinese Generalissimo knows very little, if anything, of English.

But such as the students are, it is from these young men and women that the future leaders of the nation are to rise. Unfortunately they are acted upon by every variety of influences. Non-violence offers them little attraction. A blow for a blow or two for one is an easily understandable proposition. It seems to yield immediate result though momentary. It is a never-ending trial of brute strength as we see in time of war among brutes or among human beings. Appreciation of non-violence means patient research and still more patient and difficult practice. I have not entered the list of competitors for the students' hand, for the reasons that have dictated my course about *Kisans* and Labour. But I am myself a fellow-student using the word in its broader sense. My university is different.

from theirs. They have a standing invitation from me to come to my university and join me in my search. Here are the terms :

1. Students must not take part in party politics. They are students, searchers, not politicians.

2. They may not resort to political strikes. They must have their heroes, but their devotion to them is to be shown by copying the best in their heroes, not by going on strikes, if the heroes are imprisoned or die or are even sent to the gallows. If their grief is unbearable and if all the students feel equally, schools or colleges may be closed on such occasions, with the consent of their principals. If the principals will not listen, it is open to the students to leave their institutions in a becoming manner till the managers repent and recall them. On no account may they use coercion against dissentients or against the authorities. They must have the confidence that, if they are united and dignified in their conduct, they are sure to win.

3. They must all do sacrificial spinning in a scientific manner. Their tools shall be always neat, clean and in good order and condition. If possible, they will learn to make them themselves. Their yarn will naturally be of the highest quality. They will study the literature about spinning with all its economic, social, moral and political implications.

4. They will be *khasli*-users all through and use village products to the exclusion of all analogous things, foreign or machine-made.

5. They may not impose *Vande Mataram* or the National Flag on others. They may wear National Flag buttons on their own persons but not force others to do the same.

6. They can enforce the message of the tricolour flag in their own persons and harbour neither communalism nor untouchability in their hearts. They will cultivate real friendship with students of other faiths and with Harijans as if they were their own kith and kin.

7. They will make it a point to give first aid to their injured neighbours and do scavenging and cleaning in the neighbouring villages and instruct village children and adults.

8. They will learn the national language, Hindustani, in its present double dress, two forms of speech and two scripts, so that they may feel at home whether Hindi or Urdu is spoken and *nagari* or *urdu* script is written.

9. They will translate into their own mother tongue everything new they may learn, and transmit it in their weekly rounds to the surrounding villages.

10. They will do nothing in secret, they will be above board in all their dealings, they will lead a pure life of self-restraint, shed all fear and be always ready to protect their weak fellow-students, and be ready to quell riots by non-violent conduct at the risk of their lives. And when the final heat of the struggle comes they will leave their institutions and, if need be, sacrifice themselves for the freedom of their country.

11. They will be scrupulously correct and chivalrous in their behaviour towards their girl fellow-students.

For working out the programme I have sketched for them, the students must find time. I know that they waste a great deal of time in idleness. By strict economy, they can save many hours. But I do not want to put an undue strain upon any student. I would, therefore, advise patriotic students to lose one year, not at a stretch, but spread it over their whole study. They will find that one year so given will not be a waste of time. The effort will add to their equipment, mental, moral and physical, and they will have made even during their studies a substantial contribution to the freedom movement.\*

Poona, 13-11-1945

M. K. Gandhi

\* From *Constructive Programme, Its Meaning and Place* by M. K. Gandhi.

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## GLOSSARY OF NON-ENGLISH WORDS

Ahimsa : non-violence

Alumni : graduates or former pupils of a university or school

Aparigraha : non-possession

Ardhangana : a wife (lit. one who forms half the part of the husband's body)

Ashrama : a hermitage, a place for study and discipline of life; one of the four stages of life according to Hindu scriptures

Asteya : non-stealing

Avarna : not belonging to any of the four classes of Hindu society

Badmashas : hooligans

Bande Mataram : Hail, Mother! the refrain of the Indian national anthem known by the same name

Bhajan : a hymn

Bhaji : a leafy vegetable

Bhakti : devotion

Bhang : an Indian intoxicant

Brahmachari : one observing continence, a student

Brahmacharya : continence

Brahmacharyashrama : the first of the four stages of life according to Hindu scriptures

Chapati : a cake

Charkha : a spinning-wheel

Daridranarayana : God of the poor or the poor as the embodiment of God

Deti leti : dowry system as known in Sindh

Devadasi : a girl dedicated to the service of the deity

Dharma : religion, duty

Dikshitas : the initiate

Gayatri : a sacred incantation to the sun-god

Goonda : a hooligan, a rascal

Goondaism : hooliganism

- Grihastha : a householder  
 Guru : a preceptor, a teacher, a master  
 Hartal : a strike  
 Himsa : violence  
 Jnana : knowledge  
 Kama : lust, sexual love  
 Khadi : hand-spun and hand-woven cloth  
 Lat : corrupt Hindi form of 'lord'  
 Mahar : a Harijan caste in Maharashtra  
 Mahatmya : greatness, mahatmaship  
 Mahavidyalaya : a college  
 Mantra : a sacred formula or incantation for repetition  
 Moksha : liberation, freedom  
 Mukti : liberation, freedom  
 Nagarika Samrakshaka Dal : civic guards  
 Panchama : belonging to the fifth caste, an outcaste  
 Prima facie : at first sight  
 Ramanama : the name of Rama (God)  
 Rashtrabhasha : the national language  
 Rishi : a seer  
 Sadhu : a good or virtuous man ; a saint, a sage ; a devotee of God  
 Sannyasi : one who has renounced the world, a recluse  
 Satya : truth  
 Satyagraha : tenaciously clinging to truth ; civil or non-violent resistance  
 Savarna : belonging to one of the varnas or classes of Hindu society  
 Shastras : religious scriptures  
 Shethia : a moneyed man, a master  
 Shraddha : an obsequial rite or ceremony performed in honour of departed spirits or dead relatives  
 Smritis : Hindu law books  
 Snataka : one who has finished his course of studies, a graduate  
 Summum bonum : the supreme good  
 Swadeshi : of indigenous or native make ; the principle of using goods made locally or in one's own country  
 Takli : a kind of spinning instrument  
 Upanishads : Hindu philosophical books

Varnashrama dharma : Hindu religion as based on the four classes and four stages of life

Vedas : ancient Hindu scriptures

Vidyapith : a seat of learning, a university

Vidyarthi : a student

Vinayamandir : a high school

Yajna : a sacrifice

Yamas : the five moral or religious observances, viz. truth, non-violence, continence, non-possession, non-stealing

# TO THE STUDENTS



## ON ANARCHICAL CRIMES \*

Though it was the command of his *guru*, the late Mr. Gokhale, that Mr. Gandhi, during his stay here, should keep his ears open but his mouth shut, he could not resist the temptation of addressing the meeting. It was the opinion of the speaker as well as his departed *guru* that politics should not be a sealed book to the student community; for he saw no reason why students should not study and take part in politics. He went the length of saying that politics should not be divorced from religion. They would agree with him as well as their teachers, professors and the worthy Chairman that literary education is of no value, if it is not able to build up a sound character. Could it be said that the students or the public men in this country are entirely fearless? This question engaged the speaker's serious attention although he was in exile. He understood what political dacoity or political assassination was. He had given the subject his most careful attention and he came to the conclusion that some of the students of his country were fired no doubt with zeal in their minds and with love for their motherland, but they did not know how they should love her best. He believed that some of them resorted to nefarious means, because they did not work in the fear of God, but in the fear of man. He was there to tell them that if he was for sedition, he must speak out sedition and think loudly and take the consequence. If he did so, it would clear the atmosphere of any taint of hypocrisy. If the students, who are the hopes of India, nay perhaps of the Empire, did not work in the fear of God, but in the fear of man, in the fear of the authorities — the Government whether it is represented by the British or an indigenous body, the results would prove disastrous to the country. They should always keep their minds open, regardless of what the consequence would be. Youths who have resorted to dacoities and assassinations, were misguided youths with whom

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\* Summary of an address at the Students' Hall, College Square, Calcutta, delivered in March 1915.



they should have absolutely no connection. They should consider those persons as enemies to themselves and to their country. But he did not for a moment suggest that they should hate those people. The speaker was not a believer in Government, he would not have any Government. He believes that that Government is the best that governs the least. But whatever his personal views were, he must say that misguided zeal that resorts to dacoities and assassinations cannot be productive of any good. These dacoities and assassinations are absolutely a foreign growth in India. They cannot take root here and cannot be a permanent institution here. History proves that assassinations have done no good. The religion of this country, the Hindu religion, is abstention from *himsa*, that is, taking animal life. That, he believes, is the guiding principle of all religions. The Hindu religion says that even the evil-doer should not be hated. It says that nobody has any right to kill even the evil-doer. These assassinations are a Western institution and the speaker warned his hearers against these Western methods and Western evils. What have they done in the Western world? If the youths imitated them and believed that they could do the slightest good to India they were totally mistaken. He would not discuss what Government was best for India whether the British Government or the Government that existed before, though he believed that there was a great deal of room for improvement in the British Government. But he would advise his young friends to be fearless, sincere and be guided by the principles of religion. If they had a programme for the country, let them place it openly before the public. The speaker concluded the address with an appeal to the young men present, to be religious and be guided by a spirit of religion and morality. If they were prepared to die, the speaker was prepared to die with them. He would be ready to accept their guidance. But if they wanted to terrorize the country, he should rise against them.

[The President in the course of an eloquent speech eulogized the address of the evening and suggested that the young men should band themselves for the purpose of uprooting the anarchical evil from this country. He offered a vote of thanks to Mr. Gandhi.] \*

## AT THE GURUKULA \*

**Spirit of Fearlessness**

Throughout my travels I have been asked about the immediate need of India. And, perhaps, I would not do better than repeat this afternoon the answer I have given elsewhere. In general terms, a proper religious spirit is the greatest and most immediate need. But I know that this is too general an answer to satisfy anybody. And it is an answer true for all time. What, therefore, I desire to say is, that owing to the religious spirit being dormant in us, we are living in a state of perpetual fear. We fear the temporal as well as the spiritual authority. We dare not speak out our minds before our priests and our *pandits*. We stand in awe of the temporal power. I am sure that in so doing we do a disservice to them and us. Neither the spiritual teachers nor our political governors could possibly desire that we should hide the truth from them. Lord Willingdon, speaking to a Bombay audience, has been saying recently that he had observed that we hesitated to say 'No' when we really meant it and advised his audience to cultivate a fearless spirit. Of course, fearlessness should never mean want of due respect or regard for the feelings of others. In my humble opinion, fearlessness is the first thing indispensable before we could achieve anything permanent and real. This quality is unattainable without religious consciousness. Let us fear God and we shall cease to fear man. If we grasp the fact that there is a divinity within us which witnesses everything we think or do and which protects us and guides us along the true path, it is clear that we shall cease to have any other fear on the face of the earth save the fear of God. Loyalty to the Governor of governors supersedes all other loyalty and gives an intelligent basis to the latter.

**Meaning of Swadeshi**

And when we have sufficiently cultivated this spirit of

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\* Taken from Gandhiji's speech at the Anniversary of the Gurukula, as written out by him.

fearlessness, we shall see that there is no salvation for us without true *swadeshi*, not the *swadeshi* which can be conveniently put off. *Swadeshi* for me has a deeper meaning. I would like us to apply it in our religious, political and economic life. It is not, therefore, merely confined to wearing on occasion a *swadeshi* cloth. That we have to do for all time, not out of a spirit of jealousy or revenge, but because it is duty we owe to our dear country. We commit a breach of the *swadeshi* spirit certainly if we wear foreign-made cloth, but we do so also if we adopt the foreign cut. Surely, the style of our dress has some correspondence with our environment. In elegance and tastefulness, it is immeasurably superior to the trousers and the jacket. An Indian, wearing a shirt flowing over his pyjamas with a waistcoat on it without a necktie and its flaps hanging loose behind, is not a very graceful spectacle. *Swadeshi* in religion teaches one to measure the glorious past and re-enact it in the present generation. The pandemonium that is going on in Europe shows that modern civilization represents forces of evil and darkness, whereas the ancient, i.e., Indian civilization, represents in its essence the divine force. Modern civilization is chiefly materialistic as ours is chiefly spiritual. Modern civilization occupies itself in the investigation of the laws of matter, and employs the human ingenuity in inventing or discovering means of production and weapons of destruction, ours is chiefly occupied in exploring spiritual laws. Our *shastras* lay down unequivocally that a proper observance of truth, chastity, scrupulous regard for all life, abstention from coveting others' possessions and refusal to hoard anything but what is necessary for our daily wants is indispensable for a right life; that without it a knowledge of the divine element is an impossibility. Our civilization tells us with daring certainty that a proper and perfect cultivation of the quality of *ahimsa* which, in its active form means purest love and pity, brings the whole world to our feet. The author of this discovery gives a wealth of illustration which carries conviction with it.

### The Doctrine of Ahimsa

Examine its result in the political life. There is no gift so valued by our *shastras* as the gift of life. Consider what our relations would be with our rulers if we gave absolute security of life to them. If they could but feel that, no matter what we

might feel about their acts, we would hold their bodies as sacred as our own, there would immediately spring up an atmosphere of mutual trust, and there would be such frankness on either side as to pave the way for an honourable and just solution of many problems that worry us today. It should be remembered that in practising *ahimsa*, there need not be any reciprocation though, as a matter of fact, in its final stages it commands reciprocation. Many of us believe, and I am one of them, that through our civilization we have a message to deliver to the world. I render my loyalty to the British Government quite selfishly. I would like to use the British race for transmitting this mighty message of *ahimsa* to the whole world. But that can only be done when we have conquered our so-called conquerors; and you, my Arya Samaj friends, are perhaps specially elected for this mission. You claim to examine our scriptures critically; you take nothing for granted and you claim not to fear to reduce your belief to practice. I do not think that there is any room for trifling with or limiting the doctrine of *ahimsa*. You dare, then, to reduce it to practice regardless of immediate consequences which would certainly test the strength of your convictions. You would not only produce salvation for India, but you would render the noblest service that a man can render to humanity—a service, moreover, which you would rightly assert, the great Swami (Dayananda) was born for. This *swadeshi* is to be considered as a very active force to be ceaselessly employed with an ever-increasing vigilance, searching self-examination. It is not meant for the lazy, but it is essentially meant for them who would gladly lay down their lives for the sake of truth. It is possible to dilate upon several other phases of *swadeshi*, but I think I have said enough to enable you to understand what I mean. I only hope that you, who represent a school of reformers in India, will not reject what I have said without thorough examination. And, if my word has commended itself to you, your past record entitles me to expect you to enforce in your own lives the things of eternity about which I have ventured to speak to you this afternoon, and cover the whole of India with your activity.

### The Collegiates

What the collegiates who have been just turned out during the last two or three years will be able to show, remains to be

seen. The public will not and cannot judge men or institutions except through the results that they show. It makes no allowance for failures, it is a most exacting judge. The final appeal of the Gurukula as of all popular institutions must be to this judge. Great responsibility therefore rests upon the shoulders of the students who have been discharged from the College and who have entered upon the thorny path of life. Let them beware. Meanwhile those who are well wishers of this great experiment may derive satisfaction from the fact that we have it as an indisputable rule of life, that as the tree is so will the fruit be. The tree looks lovely enough. He who waters it is a noble soul. Why worry about what the fruit is likely to be?

### **Manual Work and Sanitation**

As a lover of the Gurukula, I may be permitted to offer one or two suggestions to the Committee and the parents. The Gurukula boys need a thorough industrial training if they are to become self-reliant and self-supporting. It seems to me that in our country in which 85 per cent of the population is agricultural and perhaps 10 per cent occupied in supplying the wants of the peasantry, it must be part of the training of every youth that he has a fair practical knowledge of agriculture and hand-weaving. He will lose nothing if he knows a proper use of tools, can saw a piece of board straight and build a wall that will not come down through a faulty handling of the plumber's line. A boy who is thus equipped, will never feel helpless in battling with the world and never be in want of employment. A knowledge of the laws of hygiene and sanitation as well as the art of rearing children should also form a necessary part of the Gurukula lads. The sanitary arrangements at the fair left much to be desired. The plague of flies told its own tale. These irrepressible sanitary inspectors incessantly warned us that in point of sanitation all was not well with us. They plainly suggested that the remains of our food and excreta need to be properly buried. It seemed to me to be such a pity that a golden opportunity was being missed of giving to the annual visitors practical lessons on sanitation. But the work must begin with the boys. Then the management would have at the annual gathering three hundred practical sanitary teachers. Last but not least, let the parents and the Committee not spoil their lads

by making them ape European dress or modern luxuries. These will hinder them in their afterlife and are antagonistic to *brahmacharya*. They have enough to fight against in the evil inclinations common to us all. Let us not make their fight more difficult by adding to their temptations.\*

## 3

## ADVICE TO STUDENTS †

Mr. Chairman and Dear Friends,

Madras has wellnigh exhausted the English vocabulary in using adjectives of virtue with reference to my wife and myself and, if I may be called upon to give an opinion as to where I have been smothered with kindness, love and attention, I would have to say, it is Madras. (*Applause*). But as I have said so often, I believed it of Madras. So it is no wonder to me that you are lavishing all these kindnesses with unparalleled generosity, and now the worthy President of the Servants of India Society — under which society I am going through a period of probation — has, if I may say so, capped it all. Am I worthy of these things? My answer from the innermost recesses of my heart is an emphatic 'No'. But I have come to India to become worthy of every adjective that you may use, and all my life will certainly be dedicated to prove worthy of them if I am to be a worthy servant.

And so it is that you have sung that beautiful national song, on hearing which all of us sprang to our feet. The poet has lavished all the adjectives that he possibly could to describe Mother India. He describes Mother India as sweet-smiling, sweet-speaking, fragrant, all-powerful, all good, truthful, land flowing with milk and honey, land having ripe fields, fruits and grains, and inhabited by a race of men of whom we have only a picture in the great Golden Age. He pictures to us a land which shall embrace in its possession the whole of the world,

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\* From *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Pub. Natesan, 4 ed.

† Speech at the Y.M.C.A. in reply to the Madras Students' address on April 27, 1915, the Hon'ble Mr. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri presiding.

the whole of humanity by the might or right not of physical power but of soul-power. Can we sing that hymn? I ask myself: 'Can I, by any right, spring to my feet when I listen to that song?' The poet no doubt gave us a picture for our realization, the words of which simply remain prophetic, and it is for you, the hope of India, to realize every word that the poet has said in describing this Motherland of ours. Today I feel that these adjectives are very largely misplaced in his description of the Motherland, and it is for you and for me to make good the claim that the poet has advanced on behalf of his Motherland.

### Real Education

You, the students of Madras as well as the students all over India,—are you receiving an education which will make you worthy to realize that ideal and which will draw the best out of you, or is it an education which has become a factory for making Government employees or clerks in commercial offices? Is the goal of the education that you are receiving that of mere employment, whether in the Government departments or other departments? If that be the goal of your education, if that is the goal that you have set before yourselves, I feel and I fear that the vision which the poet pictures for himself is far from being realized. As you have heard me say perhaps, or as you have read, I am and I have been a determined opponent of modern civilization. I want you to turn your eyes today upon what is going on in Europe, and if you have come to the conclusion that Europe is today groaning under the heels of the modern civilization, then you and your elders will have to think twice before you can emulate that civilization in our Motherland. But I have been told: 'How can we help it, seeing that our rulers bring that culture to our Motherland?' Do not make any mistake about it at all. I do not for one moment believe that it is for any rulers to bring that culture to you unless you are prepared to accept it, and if it be that the rulers bring that culture before us, I think that we have forces within ourselves to enable us to reject that culture without having to reject the rulers themselves. (*Applause*). I have said on many a platform that the British race is with us. I decline to go into the reasons why that race is with us, but I do believe that it is possible for India, if she would but live up to the traditions of

the sages of whom you have heard from our worthy President, to transmit a message through this great race, a message not of physical might but a message of love. And then, it will be your privilege to conquer the conquerors not by shedding blood but by sheer force of spiritual predominance. When I consider what is going on today in India, I think it is necessary for us to say what our opinion is in connection with the political assassinations and political dacoities. I feel that these are purely a foreign importation which cannot take root in this land. But you, the student world, have to beware lest mentally or morally you give one thought of approval to this kind of terrorism. I, as a passive resister, will give you, another thing very substantial for it. Terrorize yourself; search within; by all means resist tyranny wherever you find it; by all means resist encroachment upon your liberty, but not by shedding the blood of the tyrant. This is not what is taught by our religion. Our religion is based upon *ahimsa*, which in its active form is nothing but love, love not only to your neighbours, not only to your friends, but love even to those who may be your enemies.

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One word more in connection with the same thing. I think that if we were to practise truth, to practise *ahimsa*, we must immediately see that we also practise fearlessness. If our rulers are doing what in our opinion is wrong, and if we feel it our duty to let them hear our advice even though it may be considered sedition, I urge you to speak sedition—but at your peril, you must be prepared to suffer the consequences. And when you are ready to suffer the consequences and not hit below the belt, then I think you will have made good your right to have your advice heard even by the Government.

### Rights and Duties

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I ally myself with the British Government, because I believe that it is possible for me to claim equal partnership with every subject of the British Empire. I today claim that equal partnership. I do not belong to a subject race. I do not call myself a member of a subject race. But there is this thing: It is not for the British Governors to give you; it is for you to take the thing. I want and I can take the thing. That I want only by discharging my obligations. Max Muller has told us—



we need not go to Max Muller to interpret our own religion, but he says, — our religion consists of four letters “D-u-t-y” and not in the five letters “R-i-g-h-t”. And if you believe that all that we want can be got from better discharge of our duty, then think always of your duty and fighting along those lines; you will have no fear of any man, you will fear only God. That is the message that my master — if I may say so, your master too — Mr. Gokhale has given to us. What is that message, then? It is in the constitution of the Servants of India Society and that is the message by which I wish to be guided in my life. The message is to spiritualize the political life and the political institutions of the country. We must immediately set about realizing its practice. The students cannot be away from politics. Politics is as essential to them as religion. Politics cannot be divorced from religion. My views may not be acceptable to you, I know. All the same, I can only give you what is stirring me to my very depths. On the authority of my experiences in South Africa, I claim that your countrymen who had not that modern culture but who had that strength of the *rishis* of old, who had inherited *tapashcharya* performed by the *rishis*, without having known a single word of English literature and without knowing anything whatsoever of the present modern culture, they were able to rise to their full height. And, what has been possible for the uneducated and illiterate countrymen of ours in South Africa, is ten times possible for you and for me today in this sacred land of ours. May that be your privilege and may that be my privilege! (*Applause*).\*

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\* From *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Pub. Natesan, 4 ed.

## THE HINDU UNIVERSITY SPEECH \*

Friends,

I wish to tender my humble apology for the long delay that took place before I am able to reach this place. And you will readily accept the apology when I tell you that I am not responsible for the delay, nor is any human agency responsible for it. (*Laughter*). The fact is that I am like an animal on show and my keepers in their overkindness always manage to neglect a necessary chapter in this life and that is pure accident. In this case, they did not provide for the series of accidents that happened to us — to me, keepers, and my carriers. Hence this delay.

Friends, under the influence of the matchless eloquence of the lady (Mrs. Besant) who has just sat down, pray, do not believe that our University has become a finished product and that all the young men who are to come to the University that has yet to rise and come into existence, have also come and returned from it finished citizens of a great Empire. Do not go away with any such impression, and, if you, the student world, to which my remarks are supposed to be addressed this evening, consider for one moment that the spiritual life, for which this country is noted and for which this country has no rival, can be transmitted through the lip, pray, believe me you are wrong. You will never be able merely through the lip to give the message that India, I hope, will one day deliver to the world. I myself have been "fed up" with speeches and lectures. I except the lectures that have been delivered here during the last two days from this category, because they were necessary. But I do venture to suggest to you that we have now reached almost the end of our resources in speech-making, and it is not enough that our ears are feasted, that our eyes are feasted, but it is necessary that our hearts have got to be touched and that our hands and feet have got to be moved. We have been told during the last two days how necessary it is, if we are to retain our

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\* Full text of Gandhiji's speech delivered on February 4, 1916 on the occasion of the opening of the Banaras Hindu University.

hold upon the simplicity of Indian character, that our hands and feet should move in unison with our hearts. But this is only by way of preface.

I wanted to say it is a matter of deep humiliation and shame for us that I am compelled this evening, under the shadow of this great college in this sacred city, to address my countrymen in a language that is foreign to me. I know that if I was appointed an examiner to examine all those who have been attending during these two days this series of lectures, most of those who might be examined upon these lectures would fail. And why? Because they have not been touched. I was present at the sessions of the great Congress in the month of December. There was a much vaster audience, and will you believe me when I tell you that the only speeches that touched that huge audience in Bombay were the speeches that were delivered in Hindustani? In Bombay, mind you, not in Banaras where everybody speaks Hindi. But between the vernaculars of the Bombay Presidency, on the one hand, and Hindi on the other, no such great dividing line exists as there does between English and the sister languages of India; and the Congress audience was better able to follow the speakers in Hindi. I am hoping that this University will see to it that the youths who come to it will receive their instruction through the medium of their vernaculars. Our language is the reflection of ourselves, and if you tell me that our languages are too poor to express the best thought, then I say that the sooner we are wiped out of existence the better for us. Is there a man who dreams that English can ever become the national language of India? (*Cries of 'Never'.*) Why this handicap on the nation? Just consider for one moment what an unequal race our lads have to run with every English lad. I had the privilege of a close conversation with some Poona professors. They assured me that every Indian youth, because he reached his knowledge through the English language, lost at least six precious years of life. Multiply that by the number of students turned out by our schools and colleges and find out for yourselves how many thousand years have been lost to the nation. The charge against us is, that we have no initiative. How can we have any if we are to devote the precious years of our life to the mastery of a foreign tongue? We fail in this attempt also. Was it possible

for any speaker yesterday and today to impress his audience as was possible for Mr. Higginbotham? It was not the fault of the previous speakers that they could not engage the audience. They had more than substance enough for us in their addresses. But their addresses could not go home to us. I have heard it said that after all it is English-educated India which is leading and which is doing all the thing for the nation. It would be monstrous if it were otherwise. The only education we receive is English education. Surely, we must show something for it. But suppose that we had been receiving, during the past fifty years, education through our vernaculars, what should we have today? We should have today a free India, we should have our educated men, not as if they were foreigners in their own land but speaking to the heart of the nation; they would be working amongst the poorest of the poor, and whatever they would have gained during the past fifty years would have been a heritage for the nation. (*Applause.*) Today even our wives are not the sharers in our best thought. Look at Professor Bose and Professor Ray and their brilliant researches. Is it not a shame that their researches are not the common property of the masses?

Let us now turn to another subject.

The Congress has passed a resolution about self-government, and I have no doubt that the All India Congress Committee and the Muslim League will do their duty and come forward with some tangible suggestions. But I, for one, must frankly confess that I am not so much interested in what they will be able to produce, as I am interested in anything that the student world is going to produce or the masses are going to produce. No paper contribution will ever give us self-government. No amount of speeches will ever make us fit for self-government. It is only our conduct that will fit us for it. (*Applause.*) And how are we trying to govern ourselves? I want to think audibly this evening. I do not want to make a speech, and if you find me this evening speaking without reserve, pray, consider that you are only sharing the thoughts of a man who allows himself to think audibly, and if you think that I seem to transgress the limits that courtesy imposes upon me, pardon me for the liberty I may be taking. I visited the Vishwanath temple last evening, and as I was walking through those lanes, these

were the thoughts that touched me. If a stranger dropped from above on to this great temple and he had to consider what we as Hindus were, would he not be justified in condemning us? Is not this great temple a reflection of our own character? I speak feelingly as a Hindu. Is it right that the lanes of our sacred temple should be as dirty as they are? The houses round about are built anyhow. The lanes are torturous and narrow. If even temples are not models of roominess and cleanliness, what can our self-government be? Shall our temples be abodes of holiness, cleanliness and peace as soon as the English have retired from India, either of their own pleasure or by compulsion, bag and baggage?

I entirely agree with the President of the Congress that before we think of self-government, we shall have to do the necessary plodding. In every city there are two divisions, the cantonment and the city proper. The city mostly is a stinking den. But we are a people unused to city life. But if we want city life, we cannot reproduce the easy-going hamlet life. It is not comforting to think that people walk about the streets of Indian Bombay under the perpetual fear of dwellers in the storeyed buildings spitting upon them. I do a great deal of railway travelling. I observe the difficulty of third class passengers. But the Railway Administration is by no means to blame for all their hard lot. We do not know the elementary laws of cleanliness. We spit anywhere on the carriage floor, irrespective of the thought that it is often used as sleeping space. We do not trouble ourselves as to how we use it; the result is indescribable filth in the compartment. The so-called better class passengers overawe their less fortunate brethren. Among them I have seen the student world also. Sometimes they behave no better. They can speak English and they have worn Norfolk jackets and, therefore, claim the right to force their way in and command seating accommodation. I have turned the search-light all over, and as you have given me the privilege of speaking to you, I am laying my heart bare. Surely, we must set these things right in our progress towards self-government.

I now introduce you to another scene. His Highness the Maharaja, who presided yesterday over our deliberations, spoke about the poverty of India. Other speakers laid great stress

upon it. But what did we witness in the great pandal in which the foundation ceremony was performed by the Viceroy? Certainly a most gorgeous show, an exhibition of jewellery which made a splendid feast for the eyes of the greatest jeweller who chose to come from Paris. I compare with the richly bedecked noblemen the millions of the poor; and I feel like saying to these noblemen, 'There is no salvation for India unless you strip yourselves of this jewellery and hold it in trust for your countrymen in India.' (*Hear, Hear and Applause.*) I am sure it is not the desire of the King-Emperor or Lord Hardinge that, in order to show the truest loyalty to our King-Emperor, it is necessary for us to ransack our jewellery-boxes and to appear bedecked from top to toe. I would undertake, at the peril of my life, to bring to you a message from King George himself that he expects nothing of the kind. Sir, whenever I hear of a great palace rising in any great city of India, be it in British India or be it in India which is ruled by our great Chiefs, I become jealous at once and I say, 'Oh, it is the money that has come from the agriculturists.' Over 75 per cent of the population are agriculturists, and Mr. Higginbotham told us last night in his own felicitous language that they are the men who grow two blades of grass in the place of one. But there cannot be much spirit of self-government about us if we take away or allow others to take away from them almost the whole of the results of their labour. Our salvation can only come through the farmer. Neither the lawyers, nor the doctors, nor the rich landlords are going to secure it.

Now, last but not the least, it is my bounden duty to refer to what agitated our minds during these two or three days. All of us have had many anxious moments while the Viceroy was going through the streets of Banaras. There were detectives stationed in many places. We were horrified. We asked ourselves, 'Why this distrust? Is it not better that even Lord Hardinge should die than live a living death?' But a representative of a mighty sovereign may not. He might find it necessary even to live a living death. But why was it necessary to impose these detectives on us? We may foam, we may fret, we may resent, but let us not forget that India of today in her impatience has produced an army of anarchists. I

myself am an anarchist, but of another type. But there is a class of anarchists amongst us, and if I was able to reach this class, I would say to them that their anarchism has no room in India, if India is to conquer the conqueror. It is a sign of fear. If we trust and fear God, we shall have to fear no one, not Maharajas, not Viceroy, not the detectives, not even King George. I honour the anarchist for his love of the country; I honour him for his bravery in being willing to die for his country; but I ask him: 'Is killing honourable? Is the dagger of an assassin a fit precursor of an honourable death?' I deny it. There is no warrant for such methods in any scriptures. If I found it necessary for the salvation of India that the English should retire, that they should be driven out, I would not hesitate to declare that they would have to go, and I hope I would be prepared to die in defence of that belief. That would, in my opinion, be an honourable death. The bomb-thrower creates secret plots, is afraid to come out into the open, and when caught pays the penalty of misdirected zeal. I have been told, 'Had we not done this, had some people not thrown bombs, we should never have gained what we have got with reference to the Partition Movement.' (Mrs. Besant: Please stop it.) This was what I said in Bengal when Mr. Lyon presided at the meeting. I think what I am saying is necessary. If I am told to stop I shall obey. (*Turning to the Chairman*) I await your orders. If you consider that by my speaking as I am, I am not serving the country and the Empire, I shall certainly stop. (*Cries of "Go on."*) (The Chairman: Please explain your object.) I am explaining my object. I am simply (*another interruption*). My friends, please do not resent this interruption. If Mrs. Besant this evening suggests that I should stop, she does so because she loves India so well, and she considers that I am erring in thinking audibly before you young men. But even so, I simply say this that I want to purge India of the atmosphere of suspicion on either side; if we are to reach our goal, we should have an empire which is to be based upon mutual love and mutual trust. Is it not better that we talk under the shadow of this college than that we should be talking irresponsibly in our homes? I consider that it is much better that we talk these things openly. I have done so with excellent results before now. I know that there is nothing that

the students are not discussing. There is nothing that the students do not know. I am, therefore, turning the searchlight towards ourselves. I hold the name of my country so dear to me that I exchange these thoughts with you, and submit to you that there is no reason for anarchism in India. Let us frankly and openly say whatever we want to say to our rulers and face the consequences, if what we have to say does not please them. But let us not abuse. I was talking the other day to a member of the much-abused Civil Service. I have not very much in common with the members of that Service, but I could not help admiring the manner in which he was speaking to me. He said, 'Mr. Gandhi, do you for one moment suppose that all we, Civil Servants, are a bad lot, that we want to oppress the people whom we have come to govern?' 'No,' I said. 'Then, if you get an opportunity put in a word for the much-abused Civil Service.' And I am here to put in that word. Yes, many members of the Indian Civil Service are most decidedly over-bearing; they are tyrannical, at times thoughtless. Many other adjectives may be used. I grant all these things and I grant also that, after having lived in India for a certain number of years, some of them become somewhat degraded. But what does that signify? They were gentlemen before they came here, and if they have lost some of the moral fibre, it is a reflection upon ourselves. (*Cries of "No".*) Just think out for yourselves, if a man who was good yesterday has become bad after having come in contact with me, is he responsible that he has deteriorated or am I? The atmosphere of sycophancy and falsity that surrounds them on their coming to India demoralizes them, as it would many of us. It is well to take the blame sometimes. If we are to receive self-government we shall have to take it. We shall never be granted self-government. Look at the history of the British Empire and the British nation; freedom-loving as it is, it will not be party to give freedom to a people who will not take it themselves. Learn your lessons, if you wish to, from the Boer War. Those who were enemies of that empire only a few years ago, have now become friends.

(At this point there was an interruption and there was a movement on the platform to leave; the speech, therefore, ended here abruptly.) \*

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\* From *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Pub. Natesan, 4 ed.



**Appendix I**  
**to**  
**The Hindu University Speech**

**THE PRESIDENT'S INTRODUCTION OF GANDHI**

[H. H. the Hon'ble Maharajadhiraja Sir Rameswarsingh of Darbhanga presiding over a meeting for University Extension Lectures on February 4, 1916, at Banaras, on the occasion of the foundation ceremony of the Banaras Hindu University, introducing Mahatma Gandhi—one of the two speakers of that evening, the other being Mrs. Besant—to the Ruling Princes present and the audience, spoke about him in the following terms:  
—Ed.]

Your Highnesses, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have very great pleasure in introducing to you, if introduction were needed at all, Mr. M. K. Gandhi. I know how superfluous is my preliminary function of presenting him to you, for his name is well known in every part of this wide country. He has not been merely preaching fellowship between man and man; he has lived in his own life the lesson of his teaching. He has given up luxury and comfort in order to be in greater and more vital communion with his people, he keeps up his sustenance on the simplest food, in order that he might, as he says, "compete with the poorest." How much of sympathy, how much of sincerity is there in the phrase! And the phrase and sentiment are quite characteristic of Mr. Gandhi. Born in affluence, bred up in luxury and comfort, he has yet relinquished everything that is not an absolute necessity so that he may be of the greater use to his fellow-men.

South Africa has produced no martyr greater than Mr. Gandhi; and no one at the helm of Indian affairs in South Africa could have steered through the storm and stress so successfully and smoothly. To young India therefore, there can be no greater ideal or loftier example than that of Mr. Gandhi. I now call upon him to address the meeting.\*

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\* From *Gandhi-Mahatmya*, Ed. Upendranath Basu.

## Appendix II

to

### The Hindu University Speech

#### THE BANARAS INCIDENT

Mrs. Besant's reference in *New India* and certain other references to the Banaras incident perhaps render it necessary for me to return to the subject, however disinclined I may be to do so. Mrs. Besant denies my statement with reference to her whispering to the Princes. I can only say that if I can trust my eyes and my ears, I must adhere to the statement I have made. She occupied a seat on the left of the semi-circle on either side of the Maharaja of Darbhanga, who occupied the chair, and there was at least one Prince, perhaps there were two, who were sitting on her side. Whilst I was speaking Mrs. Besant was almost behind me. When the Maharaja rose Mrs. Besant had also risen. I had ceased speaking before the Rajas actually left the platform. I gently suggested to her that she might have refrained from interrupting, but that, if she disapproved of the speech after it was finished, she could have then dissociated herself from my sentiments. But she, with some degree of warmth, said, "How could we sit still when you were compromising every one of us on the platform? You ought not to have made the remarks you did." This answer of Mrs. Besant's does not quite tally with her solicitude for me, which alone, according to her version of the incident, prompted her to interrupt the speech. I suggest that if she merely meant to protect me she could have passed a note round or whispered into my ears her advice. And, again, if it was for my protection, why was it necessary for her to rise with the Princes and to leave the hall, as I held she did, along with them?

So far as my remarks are concerned I am yet unable to know what it was in my speech that seems to her to be open to such exception as to warrant her interruption. After referring to the Viceregal visit and the necessary precautions that were taken for the Viceroy's safety, I showed that an assassin's death was anything but an honourable death, and said that anarchism was opposed to our *shastras* and had no place in India. I said then where there was honourable death it would go down to history as men who died for their conviction. But when a bomb-thrower died, secretly plotting all sorts of things, what could he gain? I then went on to state and deal with the fallacy that, had not the bomb-thrower thrown bombs, we should never have gained what we did with reference to the Partition Movement. It was at about this stage that Mrs. Besant appealed to the chair to stop me. Personally, I will desire a publication of the whole of my speech whose trend was a sufficient warrant for showing that I could not possibly incite the students to deeds of violence. Indeed it was conceived in order to carry on a rigorous self-examination.

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\* Communication made to the Press by Gandhiji, describing the circumstances under which his speech at the opening ceremony of the Hindu University, Banaras, was interrupted.

I began by saying that it was a humiliation for the audience and myself that I should have to speak in English. I said that English having been the medium of instruction it had done a tremendous injury to the country, and I conceive I showed successfully that, had we received training during the past 50 years in higher thought in our own vernaculars, we would be today within reach of our goal. I then referred to the Self-government Resolution passed at this Congress and showed that whilst the All India Congress Committee and the All India Muslim League would be drawing up their paper about the future constitution, their duty was to fit themselves by their own action for self-government. And in order to show how short we fall of our duty I drew attention to the dirty condition of the labyrinth of lanes surrounding the great temple of Kasi-Vishwanath and the recently erected palatial buildings without any conception as to the straightness or the width of the streets. I then took the audience to the gorgeous scene that was enacted on the dais of laying of the foundation and suggested that if a stranger not knowing anything about Indian life had visited the scene, he would have gone away under the false impression that India was one of the richest countries in the world, such was the display of jewellery worn by our noblemen. And turning to the Maharajas and Rajas, I humorously suggested that it was necessary for them to hold those treasures in trust for the nation before we could realize our ideals, and I cited the action of the Japanese noblemen who considered it a glorious privilege, even though there was no necessity for them, to dispossess themselves of treasures and land which were handed to them from generation to generation. I then asked the audience to consider the humiliating spectacle of the Viceroy's person having to be protected from ourselves when he was our honoured guest. And I was endeavouring to show that the blame for these precautions was also on ourselves in that they were rendered necessary because of the introduction of organized assassination in India. Thus I was endeavouring to show on the one hand how the students could usefully occupy themselves in assisting to rid society of its proved defects, on the other, to wean themselves, even in thought from methods of violence.

I claim that with twenty years' experience of public life in the course of which I had had to address on scores of occasions turbulent audiences I have some experience of feeling the pulse of my audience. I was following closely how the speech was being taken, and I certainly did not notice that the student world was being adversely affected. Indeed some of them came to me the following morning and told me that they perfectly understood my remarks, which had gone home. One of them, a keen debater, even subjected me to cross-examination and seemed to feel convinced by a further development of the argument such as I had advanced in the course of my speech. Indeed I have spoken now to thousands of students and others of my countrymen throughout South Africa, England and India and by precisely the arguments that I used that evening I claim to have weaned many from their approval of anarchical methods.

Finally, I observe that Mr. S. D. Setlur of Bombay, who has written on the incident to the *Hindu* in no friendly mood towards me and who, I think, in some respects totally and unfairly, has endeavoured to tear me to

pieces and who was an eye-witness to the proceedings, gives a version different from Mrs. Besant's. He thinks that the general impression was not that I was encouraging the anarchists but I was playing the role of an apologist for the civilian bureaucrat. The whole of Mr. Setlur's attack upon me shows that if he is right I was certainly not guilty of any incitement to violence and that offence consisted in my reference to jewellery, etc.

In order that the fullest justice might be done both to Mrs. Besant and myself I would make the following suggestion. She says that she does not propose to defend herself by quoting the sentence which drew the Princes away and that would be playing into the enemies' hands. According to her previous statement my speech is already in the hands of detectives, so that so far as my safety is concerned, her forbearance is not going to be of the slightest use. Would it not therefore be better that she should either publish a verbatim report, if she has it, or reproduce such sentiments in my speech as in her opinion, necessitated her interruption and the Princes' withdrawal?

I will therefore conclude this statement by repeating what I have said before: that but for Mrs. Besant's interruption I would have concluded my speech in a few minutes and no possible misconception about my views on anarchism would have arisen.\*

### Appendix III

to

#### The Hindu University Speech

##### AN EYE-WITNESS TO THE BANARAS INCIDENT

The Banaras incident was a very remarkable one in Mahatmaji's later Indian career, and a mention of the same may not be quite out of place in this connection. In the course of his lecture, Mahatmaji was interrupted several times by Mrs. Besant, the preceding speaker who was seated on the dais, evidently on misunderstanding certain catch phrases and sentences, quite in the midst of the speech when the speaker's theme had not yet been completely presented to the audience. Mrs. Besant, having assumed rather a superior position, actually insisted on the speaker to stop, without having referred to and obtained permission from the President of the meeting. She went so far as to rise and warn the audience and especially students of the Central Hindu College (the nucleus of the Banaras University) whose 'mother' she was, as being one of the founders and early conductors of the institution—not to attend the speech or accept the advice of the speaker (Gandhi) who was, in her opinion, misguiding the youths by his speech. Gandhi paused a while, but the audience wanted to hear him, praised Mrs. Besant's good intention, and in all humility turned to the President (H. H. the Maharaja of Darbhanga) with folded hands and asked what he was to do,—whether to continue or stop. In the meantime

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\* From *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Pub. Natesan, 1 ed.

whispers were passing from ear to ear on the dais, and the Ruling Princes and British officials left the meeting in a body with Mrs. Besant. The President, however, had been closely following the speech and did not find anything wrong or objectionable in Gandhi's utterance, and, therefore, asked the speaker to go on and not to leave his speech incomplete. So Mahatmaji went on till nearly half past nine and said his say.

The editor of the compilation was present at the meeting and was given a seat on the reporters' gallery to take notes of lectures for a journal. He was simply struck by the wonderful attitude taken by Mahatma Gandhi towards Mrs. Besant who was practically inflicting on him an insult of a very serious nature, and the audience did not like it — nay, there was strong opposition on the part of the audience who wished that Mrs. Besant should be severely dealt with for her uncalled for interference. In fact it was Mahatma Gandhi who saved Mrs. Besant on that occasion by his sound and sincere words in favour of the venerable old lady, who, he believed, was actuated by the same desire for the welfare of the students as he. The present compiler saw with his own eyes for the first time in his life how a person can remain so unmoved in the face of such strong unjustified accusations; and in fact from that very occasion he has felt the *mahatmya* of Gandhi the Great; he came from the meeting with the idea how noble a man can make of himself! His admiration for the President was also great for the capacity he displayed in the conduct of the meeting on such a critical occasion.\*

## 5

## ECONOMIC PROGRESS v. MORAL PROGRESS †

Does economic progress clash with real progress? By economic progress, I take it, we mean material advancement without limit; and by real progress we mean moral progress, which again is the same thing as progress of the permanent element in us. The subject may therefore be stated thus: Does not moral progress increase in the same proportion as material progress? I know that this is a wider proposition than the one before us. But I venture to think that we always mean the larger one even when we lay down the smaller. For we know enough of science to realize that there is no such thing as perfect rest or repose in this visible universe of ours. If therefore material progress does not clash with moral progress, it must necessarily

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\* From *Gandhi Mahatmya*. Ed. Shri Upendranath Basu.

† Lecture delivered by Gandhiji at a meeting of the Muir Central College Economic Society, at Allahabad, on 22nd December, 1916.

advance the latter. Nor can we be satisfied with the clumsy way in which sometimes those who cannot defend the larger proposition put their case. They seem to be obsessed with the concrete case of the thirty millions of India, stated by the late Sir William Wilson Hunter, to be living on one meal a day. They say that before we can think or talk of their moral welfare, we must satisfy their daily wants. With these, they say, material progress spells moral progress. And then is taken a sudden jump; what is true of thirty millions is true of the universe. They forget that hard cases make bad law. I need hardly say to you how ludicrously absurd this deduction would be. No one has ever suggested that grinding pauperism can lead to anything else than moral degradation. Every human being has a right to live and therefore to find the wherewithal to feed himself and where necessary to clothe and house himself. But for this very simple performance we need no assistance from economists or their laws.

'Take no thought for the morrow' is an injunction which finds an echo in almost all the religious scriptures of the world. In well-ordered society the securing of one's livelihood should be and is found to be the easiest thing in the world. Indeed, the test of orderliness in a country is not the number of millionaires it owns, but the absence of starvation among its masses. The only statement that has to be examined is, whether it can be laid down as a law of universal application that material advancement means moral progress.

Now let us take a few illustrations. Rome suffered a moral fall when it attained high material affluence. So did Egypt and so perhaps most countries of which we have any historical record. The descendants and kinsmen of the royal and divine Krishna too fell when they were rolling in riches. We do not deny to the Rockfellers and the Carnegies possession of an ordinary measure of morality but we gladly judge them indulgently. I mean that we do not even expect them to satisfy the highest standard of morality. With them material gain has not necessarily meant moral gain. In South Africa, where I had the privilege of associating with thousands of our countrymen on most intimate terms, I observed almost invariably that the greater the possession of riches, the greater was their moral turpitude. Our rich men, to say the least, did not advance the

moral struggle of passive resistance as did the poor. The rich men's sense of self-respect was not so much injured as that of the poorest. 'If I were not afraid of treading on dangerous ground, I would even come nearer home and show how that possession of riches has been a hindrance to real growth. I venture to think that the scriptures of the world are far safer and sounder treatises on the laws of economics than many of the modern text-books. The question we are asking ourselves this evening is not a new one. It was addressed to Jesus two thousand years ago. St. Mark has vividly described the scene. Jesus is in his solemn mood. He is earnest. He talks of eternity. He knows the world about him. He is himself the greatest economist of his time. He succeeded in economizing time and space — he transcended them. It is to him at his best that one comes running, kneels down, and asks: 'Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' And Jesus said unto him: 'Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God. Thou knowest the commandments. Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.' And he answered and said unto him: 'Master, all these have I observed from my youth.' Then Jesus, beholding him loved him and said unto him: 'One thing thou lackest. Go thy way, sell whatever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven — come, take up the cross and follow me.' And he was sad at that saying and went away grieved — for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked round about and said unto his disciples: 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God?' And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again and said unto them, 'Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God? It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God!' Here you have an eternal rule of life stated in the noblest words the English language is capable of producing. But the disciples nodded unbelief as we do even to this day. To him they said as we say today: 'But look how the law fails in practice. If we sell all and have nothing, we shall have nothing to eat. We must have money or we cannot even be reasonably moral. So they state their case thus. And they were astonished out of

measure, saying among themselves : ' Who then can be saved ? ' And Jesus looking upon them said : ' With men it is impossible but not with God, for with God all things are possible.' Then Peter began to say unto him : ' Lo, we have left 'all, and have followed thee.' And Jesus answered and said : ' Verily I say unto you there is no man that has left house or brethren or sisters, or father or mother, or wife or children or lands for my sake and the Gospel's but he shall receive one hundredfold, now, in this time, houses and brethren and sisters and mothers and children and land, and in the world to come, eternal life. But many that are first shall be last and the last, first.' You have here the result or reward, if you prefer the term, of following the law. I have not taken the trouble of copying similar passages from the other non-Hindu scriptures and I will not insult you by quoting in support of the law stated by Jesus, passages from the writings and sayings of our own sages, passages even stronger if possible than the Biblical extracts I have drawn your attention to. Perhaps the strongest of all the testimonies in favour of the affirmative answer to the question before us are the lives of the greatest teachers of the world. Jesus, Mahomed, Buddha, Nanak, Kabir, Chaitanya, Shankara, Dayananda, Ramkrishna were men who exercised immense influence over and moulded the character of thousands of men. The world is the richer for their having lived in it. And they were all men who deliberately embraced poverty as their lot.

I should not have laboured my point as I have done, if I did not believe that, in so far as we have made the modern materialistic craze our goal, so far are we going downhill in the path of progress. I hold that economic progress in the sense I have put it is antagonistic to real progress. Hence the ancient ideal has been the limitation of activities promoting wealth. This does not put an end to all material ambition. We should still have, as we have always had, in our midst people who make the pursuit of wealth their aim in life. But we have always recognized that it is a fall from the ideal. It is a beautiful thing to know that the wealthiest among us have often felt that to have remained voluntarily poor would have been a higher state for them. That you cannot serve God and Mammon is an economic truth of the highest value. We have to make our choice. Western nations are today groaning under the heel of the monster god of



materialism. Their moral growth has become stunted. They measure their progress in £ s. d. American wealth has become the standard. She is the envy of the other nations. I have heard many of our countrymen say that we will gain American wealth but avoid its methods. I venture to suggest that such an attempt, if it were made, is foredoomed to failure. We cannot be 'wise, temperate and furious' in a moment. I would have our leaders teach us to be morally supreme in the world. This land of ours was once, we are told, the abode of the gods. It is not possible to conceive gods inhabiting a land which is made hideous by the smoke and the din of mill chimneys and factories and whose roadways are traversed by rushing engines, dragging numerous cars crowded with men who know not for the most part what they are after, who are often absent-minded, and whose tempers do not improve by being uncomfortably packed like sardines in boxes and finding themselves in the midst of utter strangers, who would oust them if they could and whom they would, in their turn, oust similarly. I refer to these things because they are held to be symbolical of material progress. But they add not an atom to our happiness. This is what Wallace, the great scientist, has said as his deliberate judgment :

"In the earliest records which have come down to us from the past, we find ample indications, that general ethical considerations and conceptions, the accepted standard of morality, and the conduct resulting from these, were in no degree inferior to those which prevail today."

In a series of chapters he then proceeds to examine the position of the English nation under the advance in wealth it has made. He says :

"This rapid growth of wealth and increase of our power over Nature put too great a strain upon our crude civilization, on our superficial Christianity, and it was accompanied by various forms of social immorality almost as amazing and unprecedented."

He then shows how factories have risen on the corpses of men, women and children, how as the country has rapidly advanced in riches, it has gone down in morality. He shows this by dealing with insanitation, life-destroying trades, adulteration, bribery and gambling. He shows how with the advance of wealth, justice has become immoral, deaths from alcoholism and suicide have increased, the average of premature births, and congenital defects has increased and prostitution has

become an institution. He concludes his examination by these pregnant remarks :

“The proceedings of the divorce courts show other aspects of the result of wealth and leisure, while a friend who had been a good deal in London society assured me that both in country houses and in London various kinds of orgies were occasionally to be met with, which would hardly have been surpassed in the period of the most dissolute emperors. Of war, too, I need say nothing. It has always been more or less chronic since the rise of the Roman Empire; but there is now undoubtedly a disinclination for war among all civilized peoples. Yet the vast burden of armaments taken together with the most pious declarations in favour of peace, must be held to show an almost total absence of morality as a guiding principle among the governing classes.”

Under the British aegis we have learnt much, but it is my firm belief that there is little to gain from Britain in intrinsic morality, that if we are not careful, we shall introduce all the vices that she has been a prey to owing to the disease of materialism. We can profit by that connection only if we keep our civilization, and our morals straight, i.e., if, instead of boasting of the glorious past, we express the ancient moral glory in our own lives and let our lives bear witness to our boast. Then we shall benefit her and ourselves. If we copy her because she provides us with rulers, both they and we shall suffer degradation. We need not be afraid of ideals or of reducing them to practice even to the uttermost. Ours will only then be a truly spiritual nation when we shall show more truth than gold, greater fearlessness than pomp of power and wealth, greater charity than love of self. If we will but clean our houses, our palaces and temples of the attributes of wealth and show in them the attributes of morality, we can offer battle to any combination of hostile forces without having to carry the burden of a heavy militia. Let us seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and the irrevocable promise is that everything will be added unto us. These are real economics. May you and I treasure them and enforce them in our daily life.\*

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\* From *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Pub. Natesan, 4 ed.

## THE SATYAGRAHASHRAMA \*

To many of the students who came here last year to converse with me, I said I was about to establish an institution — *ashrama* — somewhere in India, and it is about that place that I am going to talk to you this morning. I feel and I have felt during the whole of my public life that what we need, what any nation needs, but we perhaps of all the nations of the world need just now, is nothing else and nothing less than character-building. And this is the view propounded by that great patriot, Mr. Gokhale. (*cheers.*) As you know, in many of his speeches, he used to say that we would get nothing, we would deserve nothing, unless we had character to back what we wished for. Hence his founding of the great body, the Servants of India Society. And as you know, in the prospectus that has been issued in connection with the Society, Mr. Gokhale has deliberately stated that it was necessary to spiritualize the political life of the country. You know also that he used to say often that our average was less than the average of so many European nations. I do not know whether that statement by him whom, with pride, I consider to be my political *guru*, has really foundation in fact, but I do believe that there is much to be said to justify it in so far as educated India is concerned ; not because we, the educated portion of the community, have blundered, but because we have been creatures of circumstances. Be that as it may, this is the maxim of life which I have accepted, namely, that no work done by any man, no matter how great he is, will really prosper unless he has a religious backing. But what is religion ? The question will be immediately asked. I, for one, would answer : Not the religion which you will get after reading all the scriptures of the world ; it is not really a grasp by the brain, but it is a heart-grasp. It is a thing which is not alien to us, but it is a thing which has to be evolved out of us. It is always within us, with some consciously so ; with the others quite unconsciously. But it is there ; and whether we wake up this

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\* Address delivered at the Y.M.C.A. Auditorium, Madras, on the 10th February, 1917.

religious instinct in us through outside assistance or by inward growth, no matter how it is done, it has got to be done if we want to do anything in the right manner and anything that is going to persist.

Our scriptures have laid down certain rules as maxims of life and as axioms which we have to take for granted as self-demonstrated truths. The *shastras* tell us that without living according to these maxims, we are incapable even of having a reasonable perception of religion. Believing in these implicitly for all these long years and having actually endeavoured to reduce to practice these injunctions of the *shastras*, I have deemed it necessary to seek the association of those who think with me, in founding this institution. And I shall venture this morning to place before you the rules that have been drawn up and that have to be observed by every one who seeks to be a member of that *ashrama*.

Five of these are known as *yamas*, and the first and the foremost is,

### The Vow of Truth

Not truth simply as we ordinarily understand it, that, as far as possible, we ought not to resort to a lie, that is to say, not truth which merely answers the saying, "Honesty is the *best* policy" implying that if it is not the *best* policy, we may depart from it. But Truth, as it is conceived here, means that we have to rule our life by this law of Truth at any cost. And in order to satisfy the definition I have drawn upon the celebrated illustration of the life of Prahlada. For the sake of Truth, he dared to oppose his own father, and he defended himself, not by retaliation by paying his father back in his own coin, but in defence of Truth, as he knew it, he was prepared to die without caring to return the blows that he had received from his father or from those who were charged with his father's instructions. Not only that; he would not in any way even parry the blows. On the contrary, with a smile on his lips, he underwent the innumerable tortures to which he was subjected, with the result that, at last, Truth rose triumphant; not that Prahlada suffered the tortures because he knew that some day or other in his very lifetime he would be able to demonstrate the infallibility of the law of Truth. That fact was there; but if he had died in the

midst of tortures, he would still have adhered to Truth. That is the Truth which I would like to follow. There was an incident I noticed yesterday. It was a trifling incident, but I think these trifling incidents are like straws which show which way the wind is blowing. The incident was this: I was talking to a friend who wanted to talk to me aside, and we were engaged in a private conversation. A third friend dropped in, and he politely asked whether he was intruding. The friend to whom I was talking said: "Oh, no, there is nothing private here." I felt taken aback a little, because as I was taken aside, I knew that so far as this friend was concerned, the conversation was private. But he immediately, out of politeness, I would call it overpoliteness, said, there was no private conversation and that he (the third friend) could join. I suggest to you that this is a departure from my definition of Truth. I think that the friend should have, in the gentlest manner possible, but still openly and frankly, said: "Yes, just now, as you properly say, you would be intruding," without giving the slightest offence to the person if he was himself a gentleman — and we are bound to consider everybody to be a gentleman unless he proves to be otherwise. But I may be told that the incident, after all, proves the gentility of the nation. I think that it is over-proving the case. If we continue to say these things out of politeness, we really become a nation of hypocrites. I recall a conversation I had with an English friend. He was comparatively a stranger. He is a Principal of a college and has been in India for several years. He was comparing notes with me, and he asked me whether I would admit that we, unlike most Englishmen, would not dare to say "No" when it was "No" that we *meant*. And I must confess that I immediately said "Yes"; I agreed with that statement — We do hesitate to say "No" frankly and boldly, when we want to pay due regard to the sentiments of the person whom we are addressing. In this Ashrama we make it a rule that we must say "No" when we mean "No", regardless of consequences. This then is the first rule.

Then we come to the

### **Doctrine of Ahimsa**

Literally speaking, *ahimsa* means non-killing. But to me it has a world of meaning and takes me into realms much higher,

infinitely higher, than the realm to which I would go, if I merely understood by *ahimsa* non-killing. *Ahimsa* really means that you may not offend anybody, you may not harbour an uncharitable thought even in connection with one who may consider himself to be your enemy. Pray notice the guarded nature of this thought ; I do not say "whom you consider to be your enemy", but "who may consider himself to be your enemy". For one who follows the doctrine of *ahimsa* there is no room for an enemy ; he denies the existence of an enemy. But there are people who consider themselves to be his enemies, and he cannot help that circumstance. So, it is held that we may not harbour an evil thought even in connection with such persons. If we return blow for blow, we depart from the doctrine of *ahimsa*. But I go further. If we resent a friend's action or the so-called enemy's action, we still fall short of this doctrine. But when I say, we should not resent, I do not say that we should acquiesce ; but by resenting I mean wishing that some harm should be done to the enemy, or that he should be put out of the way, not even by any action of ours, but by the action of somebody else, or, say, by Divine agency. If we harbour even this thought, we depart from this doctrine of *ahimsa*. Those who join the Ashrama have to literally accept that meaning. That does not mean that we practise that doctrine in its entirety. Far from it. It is an ideal which we have to reach, and it is an ideal to be reached even at this very moment, if we were capable of doing so. But it is not a proposition in geometry to be learnt by heart ; it is not even like solving difficult problems in higher mathematics ; it is infinitely more difficult than solving those problems. Many of you have burnt the midnight oil in solving those problems. If you want to follow out this doctrine, you will have to do much more than burn the midnight oil. You will have to pass many a sleepless night, and go through many a mental torture and agony before you can reach, before you can even be within measurable distance of this goal. It is the goal, and nothing less than that, you and I have to reach, if we want to understand what a religious life means. I will not say much more on this doctrine than this : that a man who believes in the efficacy of this doctrine finds in the ultimate stage, when he is about to reach the goal, the whole world at his feet, — not that he wants the whole world at his feet, but

it must be so. If you express your love — *ahimsa* — in such a manner that it impresses itself indelibly upon your so-called enemy, he must return that love. Another thought which comes out of this is that, under this rule, there is no room for organized assassinations, and there is no room for murders even openly committed, and there is no room for any violence even for the sake of your country, and even for guarding the honour of precious ones that may be under your charge. After all that would be a poor defence of honour. This doctrine of *ahimsa* tells us that we may guard the honour of those who are under our charge by delivering *ourselves* into the hands of the man who would commit the sacrilege. And that requires far greater physical and mental courage than the delivering of blows. You may have some degree of physical power, — I do not say courage — and you may use that power. But after that is expended, what happens? The other man is filled with wrath and indignation, and you have made him more angry by matching your violence against his; and when he has done you to death, the rest of his violence is delivered against your charge. But if you do not retaliate, but stand your ground, between your charge and the opponent, simply receiving the blows without retaliating, what happens? I give you my promise that the whole of the violence will be expended on you, and your charge will be left unscathed. Under this plan of life there is no conception of patriotism which justifies such wars as you witness today in Europe.

Then there is

### **The Vow of Celibacy**

Those who want to perform national service, or those who want to have a glimpse of the real religious life, must lead a celibate life, no matter if married or unmarried. Marriage but brings a woman closer together with the man, and they become friends in a special sense, never to be parted either in this life or in the lives that are to come. But I do not think that, in our conception of marriage, our lusts should necessarily enter. Be that as it may, this is what is placed before those who come to the Ashrama. I do not deal with that at any length.

Then we have

### **The Vow of Control of the Palate**

A man who wants to control his animal passions easily does

so if he controls his palate. I fear this is one of the most difficult vows to follow. I am just now coming after having inspected the Victoria Hostel. I saw there not to my dismay, though it should be to my dismay ; but I am used to it now, that there are so many kitchens, not kitchens that are established in order to serve caste restrictions, but kitchens that have become necessary in order that people can have the condiments, and the exact weight of the condiments, to which they are used in the respective places from which they have come. And therefore we find that for the Brahmans themselves there are different compartments and different kitchens catering for the delicate tastes of all those different groups. I suggest to you that this is simply slavery to the palate, rather than mastery over it. I may say this : Unless we take our minds off from this habit, and unless we shut our eyes to the tea shops and coffee shops and all these kitchens, and unless we are satisfied with foods that are necessary for the proper maintenance of our physical health, and unless we are prepared to rid ourselves of stimulating, heating and exciting condiments that we mix with our food, we will certainly not be able to control the over-abundant, unnecessary, and exciting stimulation that we may have. If we do not do that, the result naturally is, that we abuse ourselves and we abuse even the sacred trust given to us, and we become less than animals and brutes. Eating, drinking and indulging in passions we share in common with the animals ; but have you ever seen a horse or a cow indulging in the abuse of the palate as we do ? Do you suppose that it is a sign of civilization, a sign of real life that we should multiply our eatables so far that we do not even know where we are ; and seek dish after dish until at last we have become absolutely mad and run after the newspaper sheets which give us advertisements about these dishes ?

Then we have

### **The Vow of Non-thieving**

I suggest that we are thieves in a way. If I take anything that I do not need for my own immediate use, and keep it, I thief it from somebody else. I venture to suggest that it is the fundamental law of Nature, without exception, that Nature produces enough for our wants from day to day, and if everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, there would



be no pauperism in this world, there would be no man dying of starvation in this world. But so long as we have got this inequality so long we are thieving. I am no socialist, and I do not want to dispossess those who have got possessions ; but I do say that, personally, those of us who want to see light out of darkness have to follow this rule. I do not want to dispossess anybody. I should then be departing from the rule of *ahimsa*. If somebody else possesses more than I do, let him. But so far as my own life has to be regulated, I do say that I dare not possess anything which I do not want. In India we have got three millions of people having to be satisfied with one meal a day, and that meal consisting of a *chapati* containing no fat in it, and a pinch of salt. You and I have no right to anything that we really have until these three millions are clothed and fed better. You and I, who ought to know better, must adjust our wants, and even undergo voluntary starvation, in order that they may be nursed, fed and clothed.

Then there is the vow of non-possession which follows as a matter of course.

Then I go to

### The Vow of Swadeshi

The vow of *Swadeshi* is a necessary vow. But you are conversant with the *swadeshi* life and the *swadeshi* spirit. I suggest to you we are departing from one of the sacred laws of our being when we leave our neighbour and go out somewhere else in order to satisfy our wants. If a man comes from Bombay here and offers you wares, you are not justified in supporting the Bombay merchant or trader so long as you have got a merchant at your very door, born and bred in Madras. That is my view of *swadeshi*. In your village, so long as you have got your village barber, you are bound to support him to the exclusion of the finished barber who may come to you from Madras. If you find it necessary that your village barber should reach the attainments of the barber from Madras, you may train him to that. Send him to Madras by all means, if you wish, in order that he may learn his calling. Until you do that you are not justified in going to another barber. That is *swadeshi*. So when we find that there are many things that we cannot get in India, we must try to do without them. We have to do without many things which we may consider necessary ; but believe me, when

you have that frame of mind, you will find a great burden taken off your shoulders, even as the Pilgrim did in the inimitable book, *Pilgrim's Progress*. There came a time when the mighty burden that the Pilgrim was carrying on his shoulders unconsciously dropped from him, and he felt a freer man than he was when he started on the journey. So will you feel freer men than you are now, immediately you adopt this *svadeshi* life.

We have next

### **The Vow of Fearlessness**

I found, throughout my wanderings in India, that India, educated India is seized with a paralyzing fear. We may not open our lips in public ; we may not declare our confirmed opinions in public ; we may hold those opinions and may talk about them secretly ; and we may do anything we like within the four walls of our house, — but those are not for public consumption. If we had taken a vow of silence, I would have nothing to say. When we open our lips in public, we say things which we do not really believe in. I do not know whether this is not the experience of almost every public man who speaks in India. I then suggest to you that there is only one Being, if Being is the proper term to be used, whom we have to fear, and that is God. When we fear God, we shall fear no man, no matter how highly placed he may be. And if you want to follow the vow of Truth in any shape or form, fearlessness is the necessary consequence. And so you find, in the *Bhagavadgita*, fearlessness is declared as the first essential quality of a Brahmana. We fear consequences, and therefore we are afraid to tell the truth. A man who fears God will certainly not fear any earthly consequence. Before we can aspire to the position of understanding what religion is, and before we can aspire to the position of guiding the destinies of India, do you not see that we should adopt this habit of fearlessness ? Or shall we overawe our countrymen, even as we are overawed ? We thus see how important this 'fearlessness vow' is.

Then we have

### **The Vow Regarding the Untouchables**

There is an ineffaceable blot that Hinduism today carries with it. I have declined to believe that it has been handed to us from immemorial times. I think that this miserable, wretched, enslaving spirit of "untouchableness" must have come to

us when we were in the cycle of our lives, at our lowest ebb, and that evil has still stuck to us and it still remains with us. It is, to my mind, a curse that has come to us, and as long as that curse remains with us, so long I think we are bound to consider that every affliction that we labour under in this sacred land is a fit and proper punishment for this great and indelible crime that we are committing. That any person should be considered untouchable because of his calling passes one's comprehension; and you, the student world, who receive all this modern education, if you become a party to this crime, it were better that you received no education whatsoever.

Of course, we are labouring under a very heavy handicap. Although you may realize that there cannot be a single human being on this earth who should be considered to be untouchable, you cannot react upon your families, you cannot react upon your surroundings, because all your thought is conceived in a foreign tongue, and all your energy is devoted to that. And so we have also introduced a rule in this Ashrama: that we shall receive our

### **Education through the Vernaculars**

In Europe every cultured man learns, not only his language, but also other languages, certainly three or four. And even as they do in Europe, in order to solve the problem of language in India, we in this Ashrama, make it a point to learn as many Indian vernaculars as we possibly can. And I assure you that the trouble of learning these languages is nothing to the trouble that we have to take in mastering the English language. We never master the English language: with some exceptions it has not been possible for us to do so; we can never express ourselves as clearly as we can in our own mother-tongue. How dare we rub out of our memory all the years of our infancy? But that is precisely what we do when we commence our higher life, as we call it, through the medium of a foreign tongue. This creates a breach in our life, for bringing which we shall have to pay dearly and heavily. And you will see now the connection between these two things, — education and untouchableness — this persistence of the spirit of untouchableness even at this time of the day in spite of the spread of knowledge and education. Education has enabled us to see the

horrible crime. But we are seized with fear also and, therefore, we cannot take this doctrine to our homes. And we have got a superstitious veneration for our family traditions and for the members of our family. You say, "My parents' will die if I tell them that I, at least, can no longer partake of this crime." I say that Prahlada never considered that his father would die if he pronounced the sacred syllables of the name of Vishnu. On the contrary, he made the whole of that household ring from one corner to another, by repeating that name even in the sacred presence of his father. And so you and I may do this thing in the sacred presence of our parents. If, after receiving this rude shock, some of them expire, I think that would be no calamity. It may be that some rude shocks of the kind might have to be delivered. So long as we persist in these things which have been handed down to us for generations, these incidents may happen. But there is a higher law of Nature, and in due obedience to that higher law my parents and myself should make that sacrifice.

And next we come to

### **Hand-Weaving**

You may ask: "Why should *we* use our hands?" and say, "the manual work has got to be done by those who are illiterate. I can only occupy myself with reading literature and political essays." I think we have to realize the dignity of labour. If a barber or shoe-maker attends a college, he ought not to abandon the profession of barber or shoe-maker. I consider that a barber's profession is just as good as the profession of medicine.

### **Politics**

Last of all, ~~when~~ you have conformed to these rules, think that then, and not till then, you may come to politics and dabble in them to your heart's content, and certainly you will then never go wrong. Politics, divorced of religion, has absolutely no meaning. If the student-world crowd the political platforms of this country, to my mind, it is not necessarily a healthy sign of national growth; but that does not mean that you, in your student-life, ought not to study politics. Politics are a part of our being; we ought to understand our national institutions, and we ought to understand our national growth and all those

things. We may do it from our infancy. So, in our Ashrama, every child is taught to understand the political institutions of our country, and to know how the country is vibrating with new emotions, with new aspirations, with a new life. But we want also the steady light, the infallible light, of religious faith, not a faith which appeals to the intelligence, but a faith which is indelibly inscribed on the heart. First, we want to realize that religious consciousness ; and immediately we have done that, I think the whole department of life is open to us, and it should then be a sacred privilege of students and everybody to partake of that whole life, so that, when they grow to manhood and when they leave their colleges they may do so as men properly equipped to battle with life. Today what happens is this : much of the political life is confined to student life ; immediately the students leave their colleges and cease to be students, they sink into oblivion, they seek miserable employments, carrying miserable emoluments, rising no higher in their aspirations, knowing nothing of God, knowing nothing of fresh air or bright light, and nothing of that real vigorous independence that comes out of obedience to these laws that I have ventured to place before you.\*

## Appendix to The Satyagrahashrama

### SATYAGRAHASHRAMA

#### [Rules and Regulations]

Founded on *Vaishakha Shudi 11th, Samvat 1971*, — May 25th, 1915, — at Kochrab, Ahmedabad and since removed to Sabarmati, a junction station near Ahmedabad.

#### Object

The object of this Ashrama is that its members should qualify themselves for, and make a constant endeavour towards the service of the country, not inconsistent with the universal welfare.

#### Observances

The following observances are essential for the fulfilment of the above object :

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\* From *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Pub. Natesan, 4 ed.

## I. Truth

Truth is not fulfilled by mere abstinence from telling or practising an untruth in ordinary relations with fellow-men. But Truth is God, the one and only Reality. All other observances take their rise from the quest for, and the worship of, Truth. Worshipers of Truth must not resort to untruth, even for what they may believe to be the good of the country, and they may be required, like Prahlada, civilly to disobey the orders even of parents and elders in virtue of their paramount loyalty to Truth.

## II. Non-violence or Love

Mere non-killing is not enough. The active part of Non-violence is Love. The law of Love requires equal consideration for all life from the tiniest insect to the highest man. One who follows this law must not be angry even with the perpetrator of the greatest imaginable wrong, but must love him, wish him well and serve him. Although he must thus love the wrong-doer he must never submit to his wrong or his injustice, but must oppose it with all his might, and must patiently and without resentment suffer all the hardships to which the wrong-doer may subject him in punishment for his opposition.

## III. Chastity (*Brahmacharya*)

Observance of the foregoing principles is impossible without the observance of celibacy. It is not enough that one should not look upon any woman or man with a lustful eye; animal passion must be so controlled as to be excluded even from the mind. If married, one must not have a carnal mind regarding one's wife or husband, but must consider her or him as one's lifelong friend, and establish relationship of perfect purity. A sinful touch, gesture or word is a direct breach of this principle.

## IV. Control of the Palate

The observance of *brahmacharya* has been found, from experience, to be extremely difficult so long as one has not acquired mastery over taste. Control of the palate has therefore been placed as a principle by itself. Eating is necessary only for sustaining the body and keeping it a fit instrument for service, and must never be practised for self-indulgence. Food must therefore be taken, like medicine, under proper restraint. In pursuance of this principle one must eschew exciting foods, such as spices and condiments. Meat, liquor, tobacco, *bhang* etc. are excluded from the Ashrama. This principle requires abstinence from feasts or dinners which have pleasure as their object.

## V. Non-stealing

It is not enough not to take another's property without his permission. One becomes guilty of theft even by using differently anything which one has received in trust for use in a particular way, as well as by using a thing longer than the period for which it has been lent. It is also theft if one receives anything which one does not really need. The fine truth at the bottom of this principle is that Nature provides just enough, and no more, for our daily need.

## VI. Non-possession or Poverty

This principle is really a part of No. V. Just as one must not receive, so must one not possess anything which one does not really need. It would be a breach of this principle to possess unnecessary foodstuffs, clothing, or furniture. For instance, one must not keep a chair if one can do without it. In observing this principle one is led to a progressive simplification of one's own life.

## VII. Physical Labour

Physical labour is essential for the observance of Non-stealing and Non-possession. Man can be saved from injuring society, as well as himself, only if he sustains his physical existence by physical labour. Able-bodied adults must do all their personal work themselves, and must not be served by others, except for proper reasons. But they must, at the same time, remember, that service of children, as well as of the disabled, the old and the sick, is a duty incumbent on every person who has the required strength.

## VIII. Swadeshi

Man is not omnipotent. He therefore serves the world best by first serving his neighbour. This is *Swadeshi*, a principle which is broken when one professes to serve those who are more remote in preference to those who are near. Observance of *Swadeshi* makes for order in the world; the breach of it leads to chaos. Following this principle, one must as far as possible purchase one's requirements locally and not buy things imported from foreign lands, which can easily be manufactured in the country. There is no place for self-interest in *Swadeshi*, which enjoins the sacrifice of oneself for the family, of the family for the village, of the village for the country, and of the country for humanity.

## IX. Fearlessness

One cannot follow Truth or Love so long as one is subject to fear. As there is at present a reign of fear in the country, meditation on and cultivation of fearlessness have a particular importance. Hence its separate mention as an observance. A seeker after Truth must give up the fear of parents, caste, government, robbers etc., and he must not be frightened by poverty or death.

## X. Removal of Untouchability

Untouchability, which has taken such deep root in Hinduism, is altogether irreligious. Its removal has therefore been treated as an independent principle. The so-called untouchables have an equal place in the Ashrama with other classes. The Ashrama does not believe in caste which, it considers, has injured Hinduism, because its implications of superior and inferior status, and of pollution by contact are contrary to the law of Love. The Ashrama however believes in *varnashrama dharma*. The division of *varnas* is based upon occupation, and, therefore, a person should maintain himself by following the hereditary occupation, not inconsistent with fundamental

morals, and should devote all his spare time and energy to the acquisition and advancement of true knowledge. The *ashramas* (the four stages) spoken of in the *Smritis* are conducive to the welfare of mankind. Though, therefore, the Ashrama believes in *varnashrama dharma*, there is no place in it for distinction of *varnas* as the Ashrama life is conceived in the light of the comprehensive and non-formal *sannyasa* of the *Bhagwadgita*.

## XI. Tolerance

The Ashrama believes that the principal faiths of the world constitute a revelation of Truth, but as they have all been outlined by imperfect man they have been affected by imperfections and alloyed with untruth. One must therefore entertain the same respect for the religious faiths of others as one accords to one's own. Where such tolerance becomes a law of life, conflict between different faiths becomes impossible, and so does all effort to convert other people to one's own faith. One can only pray that the defects in the various faiths may be overcome, and that they may advance, side by side, towards perfection.

### Activities

As a result of and in order to help fulfilment of these observances, the following activities are carried on in the Ashrama :

#### 1. Worship

The social (as distinguished from the individual) activities of the Ashrama commence every day with the congregational morning worship at 4-15 to 4-45 and close with the evening prayer at 7 to 7-30. All inmates are expected to attend the worship. This worship has been conceived as an aid to self-purification and dedication of one's all to God.

#### 2. Sanitary Service

This is an essential and sacred service and yet it is looked down upon in society, with the result that it is generally neglected and affords considerable scope for improvement. The Ashrama, therefore, lays special stress upon engaging no outside labour for this work. The members themselves attend in turns to the whole of the sanitation. New entrants are generally first of all attached to this department. Trenches are sunk to the depth of nine inches and the night-soil is buried in them and covered with the excavated earth. It thus becomes converted into valuable manure. Calls of nature are attended to only at places assigned for the purpose. Care is taken that the roads and paths should not be spoilt by spitting or otherwise.

#### 3. Sacrificial Spinning

Today India's most urgent problem is the growing starvation of her millions, which is chiefly due to the deliberate destruction, by alien rule, of her principal auxiliary industry of hand-spinning. With a view to its rehabilitation in national life, spinning has been made the central activity of the Ashrama, and is compulsory for all members, as a national sacrifice. The following are the various branches of work in this department :



- I. Cotton cultivation ;
- II. Workshop for making and repairing spinning wheels, spindles, carding bows etc. ;
- III. Ginning ;
- IV. Carding ;
- V. Spinning ;
- VI. Weaving cloth, carpets, tape, rope, etc. ;
- VII. Dyeing and printing.

#### 4. Agriculture

Cotton or the *khadi* work and fodder crops for the cattle are the chief activities of this department. Vegetables and fruit are also grown in order to make the Ashrama as far as possible self-contained.

#### 5. Dairy

An attempt is being made to convert into a model dairy the Ashrama dairy which supplies milk to the inmates. Since last year this dairy is being carried on in consonance with the principles of and with the pecuniary help of the All-India Cow Protection Association, but as an integral part of the Ashrama itself. There are at present 27 cows, 47 calves, and young stock, 10 bullocks, and 4 bulls. The average daily output of milk is 200 pounds.

#### 6. Tannery

At the instance, and with the help of the All-India Cow Protection Association, a tannery has been established for the tanning of dead-cattle hides. There is attached to it a sandal and shoe-making department. The dairy and tannery have been established because the Ashrama believes, in spite of the claim Hindus make to the protection of the cow, that Indian cattle will further and further deteriorate and ultimately die out, carrying man along with them, unless vigorous attention is paid to cattle-breeding, cattle-feeding and the utilization in the country of dead-cattle hides.

#### 7. National Education

An attempt is made in the Ashrama to impart such education as is conducive to national welfare. In order that spiritual, intellectual and physical development may proceed side by side, an atmosphere of industry has been created, and letters are not given more than their due importance. Character building is attended to in the smallest detail. 'Untouchable' children are freely admitted. Women are given special attention with a view to improving their status, and they are accorded the same opportunities for self-culture as the men. The Ashrama accepts the following principles of the Gujarat Vidyapith :

1. The principal object of the Vidyapith shall be to prepare workers of character, ability, education and conscientiousness, necessary for the conduct of the movements connected with the attainment of Swaraj.

2. All the institutions conducted by and affiliated to the Vidyapith shall be fully non-co-operating and shall therefore have nothing to do with any help from Government.

3. Whereas the Vidyapith has come into being in connection with the Swaraj movement, and Non-violent Non-co-operation as a means thereof, its teachers and trustees shall restrict themselves to those means only which are not inconsistent with truth and non-violence and shall consciously strive to carry them out.

4. The teachers and the trustees of the Vidyapith, as also all the institutions affiliated to it, shall regard untouchability as a blot on Hinduism, shall strive to the best of their power for its removal, and shall not exclude a boy or girl for reason of his or her untouchability nor shall give him or her differential treatment having once accorded admission to him or her.

5. The teachers and the trustees of, and all the institutions affiliated to, the Vidyapith shall regard hand-spinning as an essential part of the Swaraj movement and shall therefore spin regularly, except when disabled, and shall habitually wear *khadi*.

6. The language of the province shall have the principal place in the Vidyapith and shall be the medium of instruction.

Explanation—Languages other than Gujarati may be taught by direct method.

7. The teaching of Hindi-Hindustani shall be compulsory in the curricula of the Vidyapith.

8. Manual training shall receive the same importance as intellectual training and only such occupations as are useful for the life of the nation shall be taught.

9. Whereas the growth of the nation depends not on its cities but its villages, the bulk of the funds of the Vidyapith and a majority of the teachers of the Vidyapith shall be employed in the propagation of education conducive to the welfare of the villagers.

10. In laying down the curricula, the needs of village dwellers shall have principal consideration.

11. There shall be complete toleration of all established religions in all institutions conducted by and affiliated to the Vidyapith, and for the spiritual development of the pupils, religious instruction shall be imparted in consonance with truth and non-violence.

12. For the physical development of the nation physical exercise and physical training shall be compulsory in all the institutions conducted by and affiliated to the Vidyapith.

*Note:* Hindi-Hindustani means the language commonly spoken by the masses of the North—both Hindu and Musalman—and written in the Devanagari or the Arabic script.

### Important Resolutions

The Managing Committee has passed the following important resolutions:

1. Responsible workers of the Ashrama and also residents in the Ashrama, whether temporary or permanent, shall all observe *brahmacharya*.

2. Persons desirous of admission to the Ashrama shall have observed the rules of the Ashrama in their own homes for the period of one year. The Chairman shall have the power of granting exemption from this rule in special cases.

3. It being undesirable that any further kitchens should be started in the Ashrama, newcomers, whether single or married, shall dine in the common kitchen.

### To Guests

The number of visitors and guests has steadily increased. Such arrangements as are possible are made for showing visitors round the various activities of the Ashrama.

Persons wishing to stay in the Ashrama are requested to write to the Secretary for permission before coming, and not to arrive without having received an affirmative answer to their enquiries.

The Ashrama does not keep a large stock of bedding and eating utensils. Those intending to stay in the Ashrama are therefore requested to bring their own bedding, mosquito net, napkins, plate, bowl and drinking pot.

No special arrangements are made for visitors from the West. But for those who cannot dine comfortably on the floor, an attempt is made to provide them with a raised seat. A commode is always supplied to them.

Guests are requested to observe the following rules:

1. Attend the worship.
2. Keep the dining hours shown in the daily routine given below.

### Daily Routine

4	a.m.	Rising from bed
4-15 to 4-45	"	Morning prayer
5 to 6-10	"	Bath, exercise, study
6-10 to 6-30	"	Breakfast
6-30 to 7	"	Women's prayer class
7 to 10-30	"	Body labour, education and sanitation
10-45 to 11-15	"	Dinner
11-15 to 12	"	Rest
12 to 4-30	p.m.	Body labour, including classes
4-30 to 5-30	"	Recreation
5-30 to 6	"	Supper
6 to 7	"	Recreation
7 to 7-30	"	Common worship
7-30 to 9	"	Recreation
9	"	Retiring bell

*Note:* These hours are subject to change whenever necessary.

## THE CHANCELLOR'S SPEECH \*

Today's function is different from every other function with which I had anything to do. I think it is a risky undertaking, not because it is likely to do any harm to the nation, but because I think I am not a fit person for the task. This confession of incompetence would not have been necessary if this college had been started with the only object of imparting education in the real sense of the term. But the Mahavidyalaya is not merely to educate its students ; it also seeks to find for them the means of livelihood. And I am bewildered when I compare the Mahavidyalaya with Gujarat College from this standpoint. Gujarat College is a big affair while our Mahavidyalaya is a small thing indeed. But in my opinion it is a great institution. There is more bricks and mortar in Gujarat College. I wish I had the power to convince you that imposing buildings and material equipment do not furnish us with the true criterion for judging institutions. I pray to God to bestow upon you a faith in our mission as strong as my own.

The position today is such that not a square inch of our land is ours ; it all belongs to the foreign Government. Not only this ground and the trees, but even our bodies are in their power ; and we are not sure that we are the captains of our soul. Such being our pitious condition, we cannot go about looking for a fine building to house the National College or even for learned men to lecture to its classes. If even an otherwise ignorant man comes and brings it home to us how the light of our soul has been quenched and this country of ours has lost its ancient wisdom, I would gladly appoint him your Principal; but I am not sure that you are ready to receive a cowherd as such. Therefore we had to search for Shri Gidwani. I confess I do not attach much importance to the degrees conferred upon him. We have a different scale of values for this College. What looks like brass will be found to be pure gold if tested on the touchstone of character.

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\* Condensed translation of Gandhiji's address on the occasion of the inauguration of the Gujarat Mahavidyalaya of the Gujarat Vidyapeeth Ahmedabad on 15th November, 1920.

We are fortunate in our staff which consists of Sindhis, Maharashtrians and Gujaratis, all of them men of high character.

I would request the ladies and gentlemen attending this function to bless the College with all their hearts. They may do so only by asking their boys and girls to join this new adventure of the spirit of India. The people of India are free with their money. But progress is never checked by the want of it. It is checked by the lack of men, by the dearth of a leader and of followers if there is a leader. I hold however that a competent leader never fails to attract followers. His tools may be as bad as you please, but a good workman never quarrels with them; he makes the most of them. So also a leader, if he is a real artist, will convert even mud into gold. I wish your teachers will become such artists of life.

Mere learning will avail us nothing. We can attain Swaraj only by dint of sterling character. We must meet the satanic violence of the alien Government with our peaceful and spiritual movement, imperfect as it is. We must plant and water the seed of liberty so that it may in God's good time grow to become the fine tree of Swaraj. And it can only grow by force of character. All will be well with us if your teachers always bear this in mind. I know they are ready to live and if necessary to die for the cause, as to die for it is to live indeed.

Granted that the teachers do their duty, I have not much to say to the students. The students, poor things, are a mere reflection of the prevailing atmosphere. If they are not enterprising, truthful and pure-hearted, the fault is not theirs, it is their parents', their teachers', their rulers'. But why blame the rulers? If it is true that 'as is the ruler, so are the subjects' (यथा राजा तथा प्रजाः), it is also true that 'as the subjects, so is the ruler'. Let us, parents and teachers, bestir ourselves to overcome the defects of national character.

Every house in the land is a school, and the parents are teachers. But the parents, ceasing to teach, have betrayed their sacred trust. We do not recognize foreign civilization for what it is and have little idea either of its merits or its defects. We have hired or rather stolen it. These stolen goods can lead us nowhere.

Ours is a temple not of book-learning but of liberty. Building of character is the task before us. We shall be fit for Swaraj to the extent that we are successful among our students. Work with students is the only instrument with which to fashion Swaraj. We must pour our money as well as our whole soul into institutions like the one we are founding today.

This is a time for deeds, not words. As for the students who have joined the National College, I look upon them as half teachers. They have laid the foundation of this College. They must therefore realize their responsibility. They are full partners, and if they do not play their part, the teachers' effort may be largely wasted. The students must understand why they left Government colleges and joined this College and what they expect here to receive. Our struggle against the alien rulers may be long drawn out. May God give you students the strength to hold out to the end. If you do so hold out, even a handful of you will be the pride not only of this College but of the motherland. And you will be so, not because of the wealth or the learning of Gujarat, but because the seed of non-co-operation has been planted and nourished in this province. This is not self-praise, for I only placed the idea before the people who took it up enthusiastically and shared my faith in all its intensity. Even as I see the trees in front of me, I see that non-violent non-co-operation alone can be the salvation of India. And this College is the visible symbol of that great movement. I am only one leaf of it and a dry one at that. The teachers too are leaves, if somewhat fresher. But you students are the branches from which a new generation of teachers will arise. You please repose the same trust in your teachers as in me. But if you find them lacking in the right spirit, you reject them as Prahlada rejected his father and carry on without them.

I pray that this College may be accepted of God as one of the potent instruments with which we shall win our independence, and may our independence make for the welfare not only of India but of the world at large.

## THE PLACE OF ENGLISH

Alongside of my suggestion about Hindustani, has been the advice that the students should, during the transition period from inferiority to equality, — from foreign domination to Swaraj, from helplessness to self-help, — suspend their study of English. If we wish to attain Swaraj before the next Congress, we must believe in the possibility, we must do all that we are capable of doing for its advancement, and one must do nothing that would not advance it or would actually retard it. Now, adding to our knowledge of English cannot accelerate our progress towards our goal and it can conceivably retard it. The latter calamity is a reality in many cases for there are many who believe that we cannot acquire the spirit of freedom without the music of the English words ringing in our ears and sounding through our lips. This is an infatuation. If it were the truth, Swaraj would be as distant as the Greek Kalends. English is a language of international commerce, it is the language of diplomacy, and it contains many a rich literary treasure, it gives us an introduction to Western thought and culture. For a few of us, therefore, a knowledge of English is necessary. They can carry on the departments of national commerce and international diplomacy, and for giving to the nation the best of Western literature, thought and science. That would be the legitimate use of English. Whereas today English has usurped the dearest place in our hearts and dethroned our mother-tongues. It is an unnatural place due to our unequal relations with Englishmen. The highest development of the Indian mind must be possible without a knowledge of English. It is doing violence to the manhood and specially the womanhood of India to encourage our boys and girls to think that an entry into the best society is impossible without a knowledge of English. It is too humiliating a thought to be bearable. To get rid of the infatuation for English is one of the essentials of Swaraj.

*Young India*, 2-2-1921

## THE NEED FOR HINDUSTANI

You and I, and every one of us has neglected the true education that we should have received in our national schools. It is impossible for the young men of Bengal, for the young men of Gujarat, for the young men of the Deccan to go to the Central Provinces, to go to the United Provinces, to go to the Punjab and all those vast tracts of India which speak nothing but Hindustani, and therefore I ask you to learn Hindustani also in your leisure hours — the hours that you may be able to save after spinning. And if you will learn these things you can learn both spinning and Hindustani in two months. An intelligent, gentle lad, a patriotic and hardworking lad, I promise you, can learn both these in two months' time. And then you are free to go out to your villages — you are free to go to every part of India but Madras, and be able to speak your mind to the masses. Do not consider for one moment that you can possibly make English a common medium of expression between the masses. Twenty-two crores of Indians know Hindustani — they do not know any other language. And if you want to steal into the hearts of 22 crores of Indians, Hindustani is the only language open to you. If you will do but these two things, during this year, during these nine months, believe me, you will have, by the time you have finished, acquired courage and acquired strength which you do not possess today. I know thousands of students — black despair stares them in the face if they are told that they cannot get Government employ. If you are bent upon ending or mending this Government how do you propose to get Government employ? If you do not want to fall back upon Government, what is your English knowledge worth? I do not wish to underrate the literary value of the English language. I do not wish to underrate the vast treasures that are buried in English books. I do not want to suggest to you that we have overrated the importance of the English language but I do venture to suggest to you that the English language finds very little place in the economy of Swaraj.



## ‘FOR GOD, KING, AND COUNTRY’

During my peregrinations I once came across boys in uniform and asked them what their uniform meant. I observed that their uniform was made of foreign cloth or cloth woven out of foreign yarn. They said it was scouts’ uniform. They whetted my curiosity by the answer. I was eager to know what they did as scouts. The answer was that they lived for God, King, and Country. ‘Who is your King?’ I asked. ‘King George,’ was the reply. ‘How about Jalianwala? Supposing you had been in that place on the 13th April, 1919 and were asked by General Dyer to shoot your terrified countrymen, what would you have done?’

‘Of course I would not have obeyed the command.’

‘But General Dyer wore the King’s uniform?’

‘Yes, but he belongs to the bureaucracy and I have nothing to do with it.’

I suggested that he could not separate the bureaucracy from the King, that the King was an impersonal ideal existence which means the British Empire and that no Indian could remain loyal, in the accepted sense, to the Empire as it was at present represented and be loyal to God at the same time. An Empire, which could be responsible for the terrorism of the martial law regime, that would not repent of the wrong, that could enter into secret treaties in breach of solemn obligations, could only be reckoned as a godless Empire. Loyalty to such an Empire was disloyalty to God.

The boy was puzzled.

I continued my argument: ‘Supposing our country becomes godless in order to enrich itself, exploits other people, traffics in intoxicants, goes to war for the sake of extending its trade and resorts to fraud in order to sustain its power and prestige, how can we be consistently loyal to God and country? Must we not forsake the country for the sake of God? I suggest, therefore, that you should bind yourself to be faithful and

loyal only to God and none else in the same sense and in the same breath.'

There were many of his companions who were deeply interested in the conversation. Their chief too came in. I repeated my argument to him and asked him to tax himself and stimulate the inquiring spirit of the grown up young men whom he was guiding. Hardly was the absorbing topic exhausted, when the train steamed out of the station. I felt sorry for the splendid lads and understood better the deep meaning of the movement of Non-co-operation. There can be but one universal creed for man, that is, loyalty to God. It includes, when it is not inconsistent, loyalty to King, country, and humanity. But it equally often excludes all else. I hope that the youth of the country as well as their tutors will revise their creed and set themselves right where they are convinced of their error. It is no small matter for tender minds to have formulas presented to them which cannot bear scrutiny.

*Young India*, 23-3-1921

## 11

### A PARENT'S DUTY

"This year, my third son aged 21 years has passed his B.A. with honours at an enormous expense. He does not wish to enter Government service. He wants to take up national service only. My family consists of twelve members. I have still to educate five boys. I had an estate, which has been sold to pay a debt of Rs. 2,000. In educating my three sons, I have spent all my earnings and all this in the hope, that my third son would secure the highest degree in the University, and then try to retrieve the position I have almost lost. I had expected him to be able to take up the whole burden of my family. But now I am almost led to think that I must give my family up to ruin. There is a conflict of duties on the one hand and motives on the other. I seek your careful consideration and advice."

This is a typical letter. And it is the universality, almost, of the attitude, that set me against the present system of education years ago, and made me change the course of the education of all my boys and others with (in my opinion) excellent results. The hunt after position and status has ruined many a

family, and has made many depart from the path of rectitude. Who does not know, what questionable things fathers of families in need of money for their children's education have considered it their duty to do? I am convinced that we are in for far worse times, unless we change the whole system of our education. We have only touched the fringe of an ocean of children. The vast mass of them remain without education, not for want of will but of ability and knowledge on the part of the parents. There is something radically wrong, especially for a nation so poor as ours, when parents have to support so many grown-up children, and give them a highly expensive education without the children making any immediate return. I can see nothing wrong in the children, from the very threshold of their education, paying for it in work. The simplest handicraft suitable for all, required for the whole of India, is undoubtedly spinning along with the previous processes. If we introduce this in our educational institutions, we should fulfil three purposes: make education self-supporting, train the bodies of the children as well as their minds, and pave the way for a complete boycott of foreign yarn and cloth. Moreover, the children thus equipped will become self-reliant and independent. I would suggest to the correspondent that he should invite all the members of his family to contribute to its upkeep by spinning or weaving. Under my scheme, no child is entitled to education, who does not spin a minimum quantity of yarn. Such families will acquire a prestige for self-respect and independence not hitherto dreamt of. This scheme does not exclude a liberal education, but on the contrary brings it within the easy reach of every boy or girl, and restores literary training to its original dignity by making it primarily a means of mental and moral culture, and only secondarily and indirectly a means of livelihood.

*Young India*, 15-6-1921

## NATIONAL EDUCATION IN TERMS OF SWARAJ \*

My notions of education are so revolutionary and as such must appear to my critics so crude. I can only think of national education in terms of Swaraj. Hence I would have even the collegiates devote their attention to perfecting themselves in the art of spinning and all it means. I would have them study the economics and implications of khaddar. They should know how long it takes to establish a mill and the capital required. They should know too the limitations on the possibility of an indefinite expansion of mills. They should know too the method of distribution of wealth through mills and that through hand spinning and hand weaving. They should know how hand spinning and manufacture of Indian fabrics was destroyed. They should understand and be able to demonstrate the effect of the adoption of hand spinning in the cottages of the millions of India's peasants. They should know how a full revival of this cottage industry will weave into an undivided whole the sun-dared Hindu and Mussulman hearts. But these ideas are either behind the time or in advance of it. It does not much matter whether they are behind or ahead of the time. This I know that some day or other the whole of educated India will adopt them.

*Young India*, 11-12-1924

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\* From a convocation address of the Punjab National University, Amritsar.

## SPEECH AT BHAVNAGAR \*

I have to speak today on the *dharma* or duty of students. The *dharma* is as easy as it is difficult. According to Hinduism, the student is a *brahmachari*, and *brahmacharyashrama* is the student-state. Celibacy is a narrow interpretation of *brahmacharya*. The original meaning is the life or the state of a student. That means control of the senses, but the whole period of study or acquirement of knowledge by means of control of the senses came to be regarded as *brahmacharyashrama*. This period of life necessarily means very much taking and very little giving. We are mainly recipients in this state — taking whatever we can get from parents, teachers and from the world. But the taking, if it carries — as it did — no obligation of simultaneous repayment it necessarily carried an obligation to repay the whole debt, with compound interest, at the proper time. That is why the Hindus maintain *brahmacharyashrama* as a matter of religious duty.

The life of a *brahmachari* and a *sannyasi* are regarded as spiritually similar. The *brahmachari* must needs be a *sannyasi* if he is to be a *brahmachari*. For the *sannyasi* it is a matter of choice. The four *ashramas* of Hinduism have nowadays lost their sacred character, and exist, if at all, in name. The life of the student *brahmachari* is poisoned at the very spring. Though there is nothing left of the *ashramas* today which we may hold up to the present generation as something to learn from and copy, we may still hark back to the ideals that inspired the original *ashramas*.

How can we understand the duty of students today? We have fallen so much from the ideal. The parents take the lead in giving the wrong direction. They feel that their children should be educated only in order that they may earn wealth and position. Education and knowledge are thus being prostituted, and we look in vain for the peace, innocence and bliss that the life of a student ought to be. Our students are weighed

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\* Speech delivered before the students of the Sharmaldas College, Bhavnagar.

down with cares and worries, when they should really be 'careful for nothing'. They have simply to receive and to assimilate. They should know only to discriminate between what should be received and what rejected. It is the duty of the teacher to teach his pupils discrimination. If we go on taking in indiscriminately we would be no better than machines. We are thinking, knowing beings and we must in this period distinguish truth from untruth, sweet from bitter language, clean from unclean things and so on. But the student's path today is strewn with more difficulties than the one of distinguishing the good from bad things. He has to fight the hostile atmosphere around him. Instead of the sacred surroundings of a *rishi guru's ashrama* and his paternal care, he has the atmosphere of a broken down home, and the artificial surroundings created by the modern system of education. The *rishis* taught their pupils without books. They only gave them a few *mantras* which the pupils treasured in their memories and translated in practical life. The present day student has to live in the midst of heaps of books, sufficient to choke him. In my own days Reynolds was much in vogue among students and I escaped him only because I was far from being a brilliant student and never cared to peep out of the school text-books. When I went to England, however, I saw that these novels were tabooed in decent circles and that I had lost nothing by having never read them. Similarly there are many other things which a student might do worse than reject. One such thing is the craze for earning a career. Only the *grihastha* (householder) has to think of it, it is none of the *brahmachari* students' *dharma*. He has to acquaint himself with the condition of things in his own country, try to realize the magnitude of the crisis with which it is faced, and the work that it requires of him. I dare say many amongst you read newspapers. I do not think I can ask you to eschew them altogether. But I would ask you to eschew everything of ephemeral interest, and I can tell you that newspapers afford nothing of permanent interest. They offer nothing to help the formation of character. And yet I know the craze for newspapers. It is pitiable, terrible. I am talking in this strain as I have myself made some experiments in education. Out of those experiments I learnt the meaning of education, I discovered *Satyagraha* and Non-co-operation and launched on

those new experiments. I assure you I have never regretted having tried these last, nor have I undertaken them simply with the object of winning political Swaraj. I have ventured to place them even before students. For they are innocent. They are today summed up in the spinning-wheel. First it was hailed with ridicule, then came scorn, and presently it will be received with joy. The Congress has adopted it, and I would not hesitate to offer it respectfully even to Lord Reading. I would not hesitate to do so, as I know that I would lose nothing in so doing. The loser would be Lord Reading if he chose to reject it. I did not hesitate to deliver the message of the wheel to the Bishop of Calcutta when I had the honour to make his acquaintance in Delhi. I did the same with Col. Maddock, and when Mrs. Maddock sailed for England I presented her with a khaddar towel, as a memento, and I asked her to carry the message from house to house.

I am not tired of preaching the message of the wheel on all occasions, at all hours, because it is such an innocent thing, and yet so potent of good. It may not be relishing, but no health-giving food has the relish of spicy foods so detrimental to health. And so the *Gita* in a memorable text asks all thinking people to take things of which the first taste is bitter, but which are ultimately conducive to immortality. Such a thing today is the spinning-wheel and its product. There is no *yajna* (sacrifice) greater than spinning, calculated to bring peace to the troubled spirit, to soothe the distracted student's mind, to spiritualize his life. I have today no better prescription for the country — not even the *Gayatri* — in this practical age which looks for immediate results. *Gayatri*, I would fain offer, but I cannot promise immediate result, whilst the thing I offer is such as you can take to, with God's name on your lips, and expect immediate result. An English friend wrote saying his English common sense told him that spinning was an excellent hobby. I said to him, "It may be a hobby for you, for us it is the Tree of Plenty." I do not like many Western ways, but there are certain things in them for which I cannot disguise my liking. Their 'hobby' is a thing full of meaning. Col. Maddock, who was an efficient surgeon and took supreme delight in his task did not devote all his hours to his work. Two hours he had

set apart for his hobby which was gardening and it was this gardening that lent zest and savour to his life.

I have pleasure therefore in placing the spinning-wheel before you, even as a hobby if you will, in order that your life may have zest and savour, in order that you may find peace and bliss. It will help you to lead a life of *brahmacharya*. Faith is a thing of great moment in the student-state. There are so many things which you have to take for granted. You accept them simply because you get them from your teacher. Some propositions in geometry, for instance, were very difficult of comprehension for me. I took them for granted, and today I not only can understand them, but can lose myself in the study of geometry as easily as I can do in my present work. If you have faith, and ply the wheel, you take it from me that some day you will admit that what an old man once told you about it was literally true. No wonder that one learned in the lore applied the following text from the *Gita* (2.40) to the spinning-wheel :

‘In this there is no waste of effort ; neither is there any obstacle. Even a little practice of this *dharma* saves a man from dire calamity’.

*Young India*, 29-1-1925

## 14

### INSTITUTIONS BEFORE PARENTS

During my Bengal tour I heard the astounding statement that the inmates of a public institution claimed to prefer the maintenance of their institution to that of their parents. This was said to command my approval. If anything I have written in these pages has given any such impression, I apologize to the readers. I am not conscious of any such guilt. I owe all I am to my parents. I felt towards them as Shrivana is said to have done towards his parents. So when I heard the statement it was with the greatest difficulty that I could curb the anger that was rising in me. The young man who took up the position was hardly serious about it. But nowadays it has become the fashion with some young men to adopt the superior attitude and



pose as paragons of perfection. In my opinion the maintenance of one's aged and infirm parents is a first charge upon grown-up sons. They may not marry if they are not in a position to support their parents. They may not take up public work till this primary condition is fulfilled. They must starve so that their parents may be fed and clothed. What, however, young men are not expected to do is to comply with the demand of thoughtless or ignorant parents. Parents have been known to demand money for things not required for sustenance but for false show or for uncalled for marriage expenses of daughters. In my opinion it is the duty of the public workers respectfully to refuse to meet such demands. As a matter of fact I cannot remember having met a single deserving case of starvation of a public worker. I have found some living in want. I have found a few who should get more than they are able to give themselves. But as their work prospers and their worth is known they will not suffer from want. Difficulties and trials make a man. They are a sign of healthy growth. If every young man found himself in plenty and never knew what it was to go without anything necessary, he may be found wanting when the trial comes. Sacrifice is joy.

It is, therefore, not right to parade one's sacrifice before the public. I was told by several workers that they did not mind any sacrifice. On cross-questioning, I was told that the sacrifice consisted in living by begging, in other words on donations. Many public workers did so, but they did not on that account claim to have sacrificed anything. Many young men have sacrificed lucrative careers. That is certainly to their credit. But even there I should respectfully suggest that praising can well be overdone. No sacrifice is worth the name unless it is a joy. Sacrifice and a long face go ill together. Sacrifice is 'making sacred'. He must be a poor specimen of humanity who is in need of sympathy for his sacrifice. Buddha renounced everything because he could not help it. To have anything was a torture to him. The Lokamanya remained poor because it was painful for him to possess riches. Andrews regards the possession of even a few rupees a burden, and continually contrives to lose them if he gets any. I have often told him that he is in need of a care-taker. He listens, he laughs and repeats the same performance without the slightest contrition.

*Madar-i-Hind* is a terrible goddess. She will exact the willing, aye, even unwilling sacrifice of many a young man and young woman before she deigns to say, 'Well done, my children, you are now free.' We are as yet playing at sacrifice. The reality has still to come.

*Young India*, 25-6-1925

## 15

## SPEECH AT GUJARAT VIDYAPITH \*

I congratulate the students who have taken their degrees and won their prizes today. I wish them long life, and may their degrees and their knowledge do credit to them and their country. Let us not lose our way in the surrounding darkness of despair. We shall have to look for rays of hope not in the outward firmament, but in the inward firmament of our hearts. The student who has faith, who has cast off all fear, who is absorbed in his work, who finds his rights in the performance of his duties, will not cower before the surrounding gloom. He will know that the gloom is transitory and that the light is near. Non-co-operation has not failed. Co-operation and non-co-operation have been there from the beginning of time. Truth and falsehood, peace and strife, life and death and all the dual throng is bound to be there. But if we have to co-operate with truth, we have to non-co-operate with falsehood ; if loyalty to the Motherland is laudable, disloyalty is despicable ; if we have to co-operate with liberty we have to non-co-operate with slavery. Whether, therefore, there be one national school or many, whether there be one student there or many, the future historian will have to give the national school a predominant place among the means for the attainment of freedom. Ours are new-fangled enterprises. The critic will find therein much to cavil at. Some drawbacks we can see ourselves. We shall have to go on with our endeavours to remedy them. I know that our administration leaves much to be desired, that our organizers and professors are imperfect. We are quite watchful about

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\* From an address to the students of the Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad.

these things and shall leave no stone unturned to remove the shortcomings.

Students, have patience. Believe that you are soldiers in the army of Swaraj. Do nothing, speak nothing, think nothing unbecoming for such a soldier. May God bless you.

*Young India*, 10-12-1925

## 16

### A STUDENT'S QUESTIONS

A student who is carrying on post-graduate studies in America writes :

"I am one of those who are extremely interested in the utilization of Indian resources as one of the means for remedying the poverty of India. This is my sixth year in this country. My special field is wood-chemistry. I would have entered executive service or taken up medical studies if I were not so profoundly convinced of the importance of the industrial development of India.....

Would you approve of my going into industrial enterprise, say pulp and paper manufacture? What is your attitude in general on the question of adopting a sane, humanitarian industrial policy for India? Do you stand for the progress of science? I mean such progress which means blessings to mankind, e.g. the work of Pasteur of France and that of Dr. Benting of Toronto?"

I answer this question publicly as so many inquiries are received by me from students all over, and as so much misconception exists regarding my views on science. I should have no objection whatsoever to industrial enterprise such as the student has in view. Only I would not call it necessarily humanitarian. A humanitarian industrial policy for India means to me a glorified revival of hand-spinning, for through it alone can pauperism, which is blighting the lives of millions of human beings in their own cottages in this land, be immediately removed. Everything else may thereafter be added, so as to increase the productive capacity of this country. I would therefore have all young men with a scientific training to utilize their skill in making the spinning-wheel, if it is possible, a more efficient instrument of production in India's cottages. I am not opposed to the progress of science as such. On the contrary the scientific spirit of the West commands my admiration and if that admiration is qualified, it is because the scientist of the

West takes no note of God's lower creation. I abhor vivisection with my whole soul. I detest the unpardonable slaughter of innocent life in the name of science and humanity so-called, and all the scientific discoveries stained with innocent blood I count as of no consequence. If the circulation of blood theory could not have been discovered without vivisection, the human kind could well have done without it. And I see the day clearly dawning when the honest scientist of the West, will put limitations upon the present methods of pursuing knowledge. Future measurements will take note not merely of the human family but of all that lives and even as we are slowly but surely discovering that it is an error to suppose that Hindus can thrive upon the degradation of a fifth of themselves or that peoples of the West can rise or live upon the exploitation and degradation of the Eastern and African nations, so shall we realize in the fullness of time, that our dominion over the lower order of creation is not for their slaughter, but for their benefit equally with ours. For I am as certain that they are endowed with a soul as that I am.

*Young India, 17-12-1925*

## 17

### FOR JUVENILES

Owing to the repeated requests of young friends under 18 years to become members of the All India Spinners' Association, the Council has passed a resolution, at its last meeting, permitting boys and girls under 18 years who are habitual wearers of khaddar to become members upon sending 1,000 yards per month of their own spinning. The idea is to encourage boys and girls to cultivate regularity, and to establish a moral bond between themselves and the poorest in the land. And this inestimable advantage is gained apart from the art of spinning being a training for the eye and fingers.

Youths who wish to become members will be expected to spin daily for at least half an hour and if they will set apart a particular half hour for the purpose, they will find that it will induce a regularity in all other studies and work that they may

undertake. They will be expected to keep their wheels in perfect order, learn to repair them and learn also the art of carding and making their own slivers. All these processes take up very little time, that is, for those who love their work.

For schoolboys and girls, I recommend not the spinning wheel but the *takli*. It has been ascertained that the *takli* enables one easily to spin 80 yards per hour. Spinning on the *takli* at the rate of half an hour daily gives one the required monthly subscription of 1,000 yards.

I hope, therefore, that many boys and girls will register themselves as members, subject to the permission of their parents or guardians. So far as schools are concerned, it will be saving of postage if schoolmasters will take charge of the yarn that may be spun and make one parcel taking care to attach cards to the quantity spun by each boy or girl. The parcels should be addressed to the Director, Technical Department of the All India Spinners' Association, Satyagrahashrama, Sabarmati.

Juveniles or their guardians at the time of sending self-spun yarn should note the name, age, sex and address of the spinner, give also the number of yards and state that the spinner habitually wears hand-spun and hand-woven khaddar.

*Young India*, 4-3-1926

## 18

### WHAT IS PRAYER ?

A medical graduate asks :

"What is the best form of prayer ? How much time should be spent at it ? In my opinion to do justice is the best form of prayer and one who is sincere about doing justice to all, does not need to do any more praying. Some people spend a long time over *sandhya* and 95 per cent of them do not understand the meaning of what they say. In my opinion prayer should be said in one's mother-tongue. It alone can affect the soul best. I should say that a sincere prayer for one minute is enough. It should suffice to promise God not to sin."

Prayer means asking God for something in a reverent attitude. But the word is used also to denote any devotional act. Worship is a better term to use for what the correspondent has in mind. But definition apart, what is it that millions of Hindus,

Mussulmans, Christians and Jews and others do every day during the time set apart for the adoration of the Maker ? It seems to me that it is a yearning of the heart to be one with the Maker, an invocation for His blessing. It is in this case the attitude that matters, not words uttered or muttered. And often the association of words that have been handed down from ancient times has an effect which in their rendering into one's mother-tongue they will lose altogether. Thus the *Gayatri* translated and recited in, say, Gujarati, will not have the same effect as the original. The utterance of the word Rama will instantaneously affect millions of Hindus, when the word God, although they may understand the meaning, will leave them untouched. Words after all acquire a power by long usage and sacredness associated with their use. There is much therefore to be said for the retention of the old Sanskrit formulae for the most prevalent *mantras* or verses. That the meaning of them should be properly understood goes without saying.

There can be no fixed rule laid down as to the time these devotional acts should take. It depends upon individual temperament. These are precious moments in one's daily life. The exercises are intended to sober and humble us and enable us to realize that nothing happens without His will and that we are but 'clay in the hands of the Potter'. These are moments when one reviews one's immediate past, confesses one's weakness, asks for forgiveness and strength to be and do better. One minute may be enough for some, twenty-four hours may be too little for others. For those who are filled with the presence of God in them, to labour is to pray. Their life is one continuous prayer or act of worship. For those others who act only to sin, to indulge themselves, and live for self, no time is too much. If they had patience and faith and the will to be pure, they would pray till they feel the definite purifying presence of God within them. For us ordinary mortals there must be a middle path between these two extremes. We are not so exalted as to be able to say that all our acts are dedication, nor perhaps are we so far gone as to be living purely for self. Hence have all religions set apart times for general devotion. Unfortunately these have nowadays become merely mechanical and formal, where they are not hypocritical. What is necessary therefore is the correct attitude to accompany these devotions.

For definite personal prayer in the sense of asking God for something, it should certainly be in one's own tongue. Nothing can be grander than to ask God to make us act justly towards everything that lives.

*Young India*, 10-6-1926

## 19

### MESSAGE TO THE STUDENTS \*

#### 1921 and 1926 — What a Difference ?

Please do not think that I am striking a melancholy note. We are not going back, our country is not going back. We have gone five years nearer Swaraj and there can be no doubt about it. If someone say that it was very nearly achieved in 1921 and today it is far away, no one knows how far, do not believe it. Prayerful well-meaning effort never goes in vain, and man's success lies only in such an effort. The result is in His hands.

Strength of numbers is the delight of the timid. The valiant of spirit glory in fighting alone. And you are all here to cultivate that valour of the spirit. Be you one or many, this valour is the only true valour, all else is false. And the valour of the spirit cannot be achieved without sacrifice, determination, faith and humility.

We have built our Vidyalaya on the foundation of self-purification. Non-violent Non-co-operation is one aspect of it. The 'non' means renunciation of violence and all that stands for it, i.e., all Government control. But so long as we do not co-operate with our 'untouchable' brethren, so long as there is no heart-unity between men of different faiths, so long as we do not co-operate with the millions of our countrymen by according to the spinning wheel and khaddar the sacred place they deserve, the negative prefix is entirely nugatory. That non-co-operation will not be based on *ahimsa*, but *himsa* i.e., hatred. A negative injunction without a positive obligation is like body without soul, worthy to be consigned to the flames. There are 7,000 railway stations for the 7,00,000 villages of India. We do

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\* Address read (it being Gandhiji's day of silence), to the students of the Gujarat Mahavidyalaya, Ahmedabad, on 14th June, 1926.

not even claim to know these 7,000 villages. We know only through history the condition of villages not within easy reach of railway stations. The only loving tie of service that can bind the villagers to us is the spinning wheel. Those who have not understood this basic truth are in this institution to no purpose. The education is not 'national' that takes no count of the starving millions of India and that devises no means for their relief. Government contact with the villages ends with the collection of revenue. Our contact with them begins with their service through the spinning wheel, but it does not end there. The spinning wheel is the centre of that service. If you spend your next vacation in some far-off village in the interior, you will see the truth of my remark. You will find the people cheerless and fear-stricken. You will find houses in ruins. You will look in vain for any sanitary or hygienic conditions. You will find the cattle in a miserable way, and yet you will see idleness stalking there. The people will tell you of the spinning wheel having been in their homes long ago ; but today they will entertain no talk of it or of any other cottage industry. They have no hope left in them. They live, for they cannot die at will. They will spin only if *you* spin. Even if a hundred out of a population of 300 in a village spin, you assure them of an additional income of Rs. 1,800 a year. You can lay the foundation of a solid reform on this income in every village. It is easy I know to say this, but difficult to do. Faith can make it easy. 'I am alone, how can I reach seven hundred thousand villages?'—This is the argument that pride whispers to us. Start with the faith that if you fix yourself up in one single village and succeed, the rest will follow. Progress is then assured. The Vidyalaya wants to make you workers of that type. If it is a cheerless job, the Vidyalaya is indeed cheerless and fit to be deserted.

You will see that we open this term with a few changes in our staff. Acharya Gidwani whose sacrifice rendered the opening of this College possible, and who won the affection of students, has at my instance accepted the office of Principalship of Prem Mahavidyalaya, Brindaban. I know that students were agitated over this. I congratulate them on their devotion to their principal. I give you today the consolation that I gave the students that saw me the other day. We have to put up with these partings. We can but treasure the good things of our loved ones



and follow them. Rest assured that we have done everything in the interests of the College. Fortunately we have Shri Nrisinha-prasad to serve us as Vice-Chancellor. He has lived with students for years and he often comes in contact with you. Trust yourselves to him. My doors are always open for every one of you. It has been a constant source of sorrow to me that I have not been able to come as closely in contact with you as I have wished.

*Young India*, 17-6-1926

## 20

### SACRIFICE

I have before me several letters from young men complaining that they have so many family burdens that the poor salary they get from public work is totally inadequate for their wants. One therefore says he must give up public work and go to Europe by raising a loan or securing a gift and increase his earning capacity ; another is in search of a paying job ; yet another wants a capital to start a paying business. Everyone of these young men is a sound, honest and self-sacrificing worker. But a reaction has set in. Family requirements have increased. Khadi or national education does not satisfy them. They do not desire to be a burden upon public service by asking for an increase. But the logical outcome of this attitude of mind must mean, if it becomes at all general, either stoppage of the public service which depends upon the labours of such men and women, or a general indefinite increase which in its turn must bring about the same undesirable result.

It was because this process of multiplication of wants out of proportion to our surroundings was discovered to be going on with increasing velocity that Non-co-operation was conceived. And thus conceived it was not Non-co-operation with persons, but with an attitude that was responsible for the system which had seized us in its serpentine coil and which was reducing us to dust. The system had raised the standard of living among us, its creatures, wholly unwarranted by the general condition of the country. And since India did not live upon exploitation of other peoples, the expansion of the middle class

who were also the middle-men meant extinction of the lowest strata. Hence the smallest villages were dying out through sheer exhaustion. This was all plain to many of us in 1920. The arresting movement is yet in its infancy. Let us not hinder it by any hasty action.

This artificial increase in our wants has been felt more severely than it otherwise would have been, because of the persistence of the family system which the Western method is ill-designed to support. The joint system having become wooden; its evils have become accentuated, its sweet graces have disappeared. Thus evil has been added to evil.

Our self-sacrifice must therefore be in terms of the requirements of the country. The reforms required are more from within than from without. A perfect constitution super-imposed upon a rotten internal condition will be like a whited sepulchre.

The process of self-purification must therefore be completed. The spirit of self-sacrifice must be extended. Great as the sacrifice has been, it is nothing compared to the demands made upon us by the country. We dare not support able-bodied members of the family — men or women — who will not work. We may not contribute a single pice towards the expenses of conforming to meaningless or superstitious customs, such as caste-dinners, or towards forming expensive marriage connections. Every marriage and every death brings an unnecessary cruel burden upon the head of the family. We must refuse to regard such acts of self-denial as self-sacrifice. They are evils to be counteracted with courage and resolution.

There is too, for us, the inordinately expensive education. When it is difficult for millions even to make the two ends meet, when millions are dying of starvation, it is monstrous to think of giving our relatives a costly education. Expansion of the mind will come from hard experience, not necessarily in the college or the school-room. When some of us deny ourselves and ours the so-called higher education, we shall find the true means of giving and receiving a really high education. Is there not, may there not be, a way of each boy paying for his own education? There may be no such way. Whether there is or there is not such a way is irrelevant. But there is no doubt that when

we deny ourselves the way of expensive education, seeing that aspiration after higher education is a laudable end, we shall find out a way of fulfilling it more in accord with our surroundings. The golden rule to apply in all such cases is resolutely to refuse to have what millions cannot. This ability to refuse will not descend upon us all of a sudden. The first thing is to cultivate the mental attitude that will not have possessions or facilities denied to millions, and the next immediate thing is to rearrange our lives as fast as possible in accordance with that mentality.

Without a large, very large, army of such self-sacrificing and determined workers, real progress of the masses, I hold, to be an impossibility. And without that progress, there is no such thing as Swaraj. Progress towards Swaraj will be in exact proportion to the increase in the number of workers who will dare to sacrifice their all for the cause of the poor.

*Young India*, 24-6-1926

## 21

### “MAHATMAJI'S ORDER”

A teacher writes :

“There is a small group of boys of our school in...who have been regularly sending 1,000 yards of self-spun yarn to the A.I.S.A. for some months, and they have been doing this little service merely on account of intense love for you. If any one asks them the reason for their spinning, they reply, ‘It is Mahatmaji's order. It has got to be obeyed.’ I think such mentality on the part of little boys is to be encouraged in every way. Slave mentality is something quite different from the spirit of hero-worship or implicit obedience. These boys are now anxious to get some message from you in your own handwriting for their inspiration. I am sure their request will be complied with.”

I do not know whether the mentality betrayed by this letter is hero-worship or blind worship. I can conceive occasions when implicit obedience without waiting for reasoning out causes is a necessity. It is essentially the quality of a soldier. And no nation can make substantial progress without the possession of that quality by a vast number of its people. But occasions for such obedience are and must be rare in any well-ordered society. The worst thing that can happen to boys in a school is to have

to render blind obedience to everything that the teacher says. On the contrary, if teachers are to stimulate the reasoning faculty of boys and girls under their care, they would continuously tax their reason and make them think for themselves. Faith only begins where reason stops. But there are very few actions in the world for which reasonable justification cannot be found. A teacher would not tolerate from his pupils, who were asked to account for drinking boiled and filtered water in a locality where the quality of well-water was suspected, an answer to the effect that such were the orders of a *mahatma*. And if it be wrong to admit such an answer in the supposed case, it is surely wrong to approve of the justification for spinning that the boys of the school in question have given for their spinning. When I am dislodged from my *Mahatmaship* in that school, as I have certainly been dislodged in several homes to my knowledge, (for some of my correspondents have been gracious enough to inform me of their lost love), I am afraid the spinning wheel will be destroyed. Surely, a cause is often greater than the man. Certainly, the spinning wheel is greater than myself. I should be exceedingly sorry to find, when the hero-worship of me is destroyed, because of some fatuous mistakes that I may commit or because people are enraged against me for some cause or other, that the good cause of the spinning wheel had to suffer. It is therefore infinitely better that the pupils should reason out for themselves all the things that are capable of being so treated. The spinning wheel is essentially a thing for reasoning out. With it, in my opinion, is mixed up the well-being of the whole mass of Indian humanity. Pupils should therefore learn something about the deep poverty of the masses. They should have an ocular demonstration of some villages that are crumbling down to pieces. They should know the population of India. They should know the vast extent of this peninsula and they should know what it is that all the many millions can do to add to their scanty resources. They should learn to identify themselves with the poor and the down-trodden in the land. They should be taught to deny themselves, so far as possible, things that the poorest cannot have. Then they will understand the virtue of spinning. It will then survive any shock including disillusionment about myself. The cause of the spinning wheel is too great and too good to have to rest

on mere hero-worship. It lends itself to scientific economic treatment.

I know that there is among us a great deal of blind hero-worship such as this correspondent has described and I hope that the teachers of national schools will take note of the warning I have uttered and prevent their pupils from lazily basing their actions upon statements, without testing, of men reputed to be great.

*Young India*, 24-6-1926

## 22

### STUDENTS AND NON-CO-OPERATION

A student in a national college has written a long letter of which I give the substance as follows :

" You are aware that in the year 1920 many students all over India left Government-controlled institutions. Several national institutions were started. Some have already gone under. The one that I know is a poor affair. It may be called a foreign imitation under national control minus discipline. Many of our teachers do not know the distinction between khaddar and foreign or mill-made cloth. They dress like sahebs and though themselves dressed in foreign cloth would not mind talking to us about *swadeshi*. They remind one of drunkards advising others to give up liquor. They talk of the spirit of sacrifice and the value of joining national institutions when they send their own sons or other relatives to Government-controlled schools or colleges. In fact, there is very little love lost between them and us. Do you wonder at many students having gone back to Government institutions ? A few of us however still remain out. But how long can we do so ? I would like to prosecute my studies in Germany, but, my pecuniary circumstances do not allow me to do so. Can you not send me to the Berlin or any other European University ? "

The writer has given me his own full name and the name of the institution and all other available particulars. I have purposely refrained from giving the name of the institution and further particulars. For, I do not know enough of it and I could not be party to the specific condemnation of any institution without having studied it. Public purpose is sufficiently served by publishing the general complaint so that those institutions to which the complaint may be applicable may examine themselves and remove all cause of complaint. There is no doubt

that in several national institutions things have not been as they should have been and that the professors or teachers have not conformed to the elementary requirements of the Congress programme in so far as it is applicable to national institutions. Teachers who themselves do not believe in non-violence or truth or non-co-operation, cannot impart to their students the spirit of any of these things. If they send their children to Government schools, they may not expect to enthuse their pupils over national institutions. Nor may they expect to infect their pupils with love of the *charkha* or khaddar, if they will not spin themselves or wear khaddar. It is hardly necessary to remark that all national institutions do not deserve the description that the writer gives of the one to which he has belonged. But, the point I desire to emphasize in connection with this letter is that there should be no sorrow felt over one's sacrifice. That sacrifice which causes pain loses its sacred character and will break down under stress. One gives up things that one considers to be injurious and therefore there should be pleasure attendant upon the giving up. Whether the substitute is effective or not is a different question altogether. If the substitute is effective, it is no doubt well ; but it is well also even if the substitute is ineffective. It must lead to an effort to procure a better substitute, but surely not to a return to what has been given up after full knowledge and experience of its harmful character. This hankering after going to Berlin or to some other European University is not a sign of the spirit of non-co-operation. It is on a par with substituting Japanese cloth for the English manufacture. We give up English cloth not because it is English but because it robs the poor of their hereditary employment and therefore makes them poorer still. The Japanese substitute robs the poor no less than the English cloth. Similarly, we give up Government institutions because of their harmful character. We may not therefore reproduce the same thing under a different name and hug to ourselves the belief that we are non-co-operators. Non-co-operation means co-operation with all that is best in the Indian spirit. We cannot cultivate that taste by being in Berlin. It is in India that all our experiments must be made. Till at least we arrive at a complete and effective substitute, the first step, it is quite plain, must be the giving up of Government institutions. Those students therefore who took that step did

well if they understood what they were doing. And only the sacrifice of such students will be, of increasing benefit to the country as time passes. But those who are repenting or dissatisfied with their own lot should certainly have no hesitation in going back to Government institutions. After all it is a conflict of ideal and if the ideal that Non-co-operation stands for is good and is congenial to the Indian soil, it will triumph over every conceivable obstacle.

*Young India*, 15-7-1926

## 23

## STUDENTS' DUTY

A Lahore correspondent writes a pathetic letter in scholarly Hindi. I give a free rendering of the main parts of the letter :

"Hindu-Muslim feuds and the feverish activity over the Council elections have thrown the non-co-operating students off their balance. They have sacrificed much for the country. Its service is their watchword. They are today without a helmsman. They cannot enthuse over Councils. They do not want to take part in the Hindu-Muslim feud. They are therefore drifting towards a life of aimlessness and worse. Must they be allowed thus to drift? Pray remember that ultimately you are responsible for this result. For, though nominally they obeyed the Congress call, in reality it was you they obeyed. Is it not up to you now to guide them?"

Man can make a trough, can he lead unwilling horses to it? I sympathize with these splendid young men but I am unable to blame myself for their drifting. If they obeyed my call, what is there to prevent them doing so now? I am speaking with no uncertain voice, to all who will listen, to take up the gospel of the *charkha*. But the fact is that in 1920 they listened not to me (and that very properly) but to the Congress. What is perhaps more accurate, they listened to the inner voice. The Congress call was an echo of their own longings. They were ready for the negative part. The call of the *charkha* which is the positive part of the Congress programme, for let it be remembered that it is still the Congress call, seems to make no appeal to them. If so, there is still another much-needed work which is also part of the positive programme of the Congress — the service of the untouchables. Here too there is more than enough

work for all the students who are pining to do national service. Let them understand that all those who raise the moral tone of the community as a whole, all those who find occupation for the idle millions, are real builders of Swaraj. They will make easy even the purely political work. This positive work will evoke the best in the students. It is both post-graduate and pre-graduate work. It is the only real graduating.

But it may be that neither the *charkha* work nor the untouchability work is exciting enough for them. Then let them know that I am useless as a physician. I have but a limited stock of prescriptions. I believe in unity of disease and therefore also of cure. But must a physician be blamed for his limitations, especially when he declares them from the house-top?

The students for whom the correspondent writes must be resourceful enough to find their own course in life. Self-reliance is Swaraj.

*Young India*, 16-9-1926

## 24

## NO FAITH IN PRAYER

Here is a letter written by a student to the Principal of a national institution asking to be excused from attending its prayer meetings :

"I beg to state that I have no belief in prayer, as I do not believe in anything known as God to which I should pray. I never feel any necessity of supposing a God for myself. What do I lose if I do not care for Him and calmly and sincerely work my own schemes?

"So far as congregational prayer is concerned, it is of no use. Can such a huge mass of men enter into any mental concentration upon a thing, however, trifling it may be? Are the little and ignorant children expected to fix their fickle attention on the subtlest ideas of our great scriptures, God and soul and equality of all men and many other high-sounding phrases? This great performance is required to be done at a particular time at the command of a particular man. Can love for the so-called Lord take its root in the hearts of boys by any such mechanical function? Nothing can be more repugnant to reason than to expect the same behaviour from men of every temperament. Therefore prayer should not be a compulsion. Let those pray who have a taste for it and those avoid who dislike it. Anything done without conviction is an immoral and degrading action."



Let us first examine the worth of the last idea. Is it an immoral and degrading act to submit to discipline before one begins to have conviction about its necessity? Is it immoral and degrading to study subjects according to the school syllabus if one has no conviction about its utility? May a boy be excused from studying his vernacular, if he has persuaded himself that it is useless? Is it not true to say that a school boy has no conviction about the things he has to learn or the discipline he has to go through? His choice is exhausted if he had it, when he elected to belong to an institution. His joining one means that he will willingly submit to its rules and regulations. It is open to him to leave it but he may not choose what or how he will learn.

It is for teachers to make attractive and intelligible what to the pupils may at first appear repulsive or uninteresting.

It is easy enough to say, 'I do not believe in God.' For God permits all things to be said of Him with impunity. He looks at our acts. And any breach of His Law carries with it, not its vindictive, but its purifying, compelling, punishment. God's existence cannot be, does not need to be proved. God Is. If He is not felt, so much the worse for us. The absence of feeling is a disease which we shall some day throw off *volens volens*.

But a boy may not argue. He must out of a sense of discipline attend prayer meetings if the institution to which he belongs requires such attendance. He may respectfully put his doubts before his teachers. He need not believe what does not appeal to him. But if he has respect for his teachers, he will do without believing, what he is asked to do, not out of fear, not out of churlishness, but with the knowledge that it is right for him so to do and with the hope that what is dark to him today will some day be made clear to him.

Prayer is not an asking. It is a longing of the soul. It is a daily admission of one's weakness. The tallest among us has a perpetual reminder of his nothingness before death, disease, old age, accidents etc. We are living in the midst of death. What is the value of 'working for our own schemes' when they might be reduced to naught in the twinkling of an eye, or when we may be equally swiftly and unawares taken away from them? But we may feel strong as a rock, if we could truthfully say, 'We work for God and His schemes.' Then all is as

clear as daylight. Then nothing perishes. All perishing is then only what seems. Death and destruction have *then, but only then*, no reality about them. For death or destruction is then but a change. An artist destroys his picture for creating a better one. A watch-maker throws away a bad spring to put in a new and useful one.

A congregational prayer is a mighty thing. What we do not often do alone, we do together. Boys do not need conviction. If they merely attend in obedience to the call to prayer without inward resistance, they feel the exaltation. But many do not. They are even mischievous. All the same the unconscious effect cannot be resisted. Are there not boys who at the commencement of their career were scoffers but who subsequently became mighty believers in the efficacy of congregational prayer? It is a common experience for men who have no robust faith to seek the comfort of congregational prayer. All who flock to churches, temples, or mosques are not scoffers or humbugs. They are honest men and women. For them congregational prayer is like a daily bath, a necessity, of their existence. These places of worship are not a mere idle superstition to be swept away at the first opportunity. They have survived all attacks up to now and are likely to persist to the end of time.

*Young India*, 23-9-1926

## 25

### TYRANNY OF WORDS

A correspondent thus writes on my article "No Faith in Prayer" published in *Young India* dated September 23rd :

"In your article bearing the above caption you hardly do justice to the 'boy' or to your own position as a great thinker. It is true that the expressions used by the writer in his letter are not all happy but of his clarity of thought there is no doubt. It is also very evident that he is not a boy as the word is understood. I should be much surprised to find him under twenty. Even if he is young he seems to show sufficient intellectual development not to be treated in the manner of 'A boy may not argue'. The writer of a letter is a rationalist while you are a believer, two age-old types, with age-old conflict. The attitude of the one is, 'Let me be convinced and I shall believe', that of the other is, 'Believe and conviction shall come'. The first appeals to reason, the second appeals to authority. You seem to think that

agnosticism is but a passing phase among all young people and that faith comes to them sooner or later. There is the well-known case of Swami Vivekananda to support your view. You therefore proceed to prescribe a compulsory dose of prayer to the 'boy' for his own good. Your reasons are twofold. *Firstly*, prayer for its own sake, as a recognition of one's own littleness, and mightiness and goodness of the supposed higher being; *Secondly*, for its utility, for the solace it brings to those who want to be solaced. I shall dispose of the second argument first. Here it is recommended as a sort of staff to the weak. Such are the trials of life, and such is their power to shatter the reason of men that great many people may need prayer and faith sometime. They have a right to it and they are welcome to it. But there have been and there are always some true rationalists—few no doubt—who have never felt the necessity of either. There is also the class of people who while they are not aggressive doubters are indifferent to religion.

"As all people do not ultimately require the help of prayer and as those who feel its necessity are *free* to take to it and *do* take to it, when required, compulsion in prayer from the point of utility cannot be upheld. Compulsory physical exercise and education may be necessary for physical and mental development of a person, not so the belief in God and prayer for the moral side. Some of the world's greatest agnostics have been the most moral men. To these I suppose you would recommend prayer for its own sake, as an expression of humility, in fact your first argument. Too much has been made of this humility. So vast is knowledge that even the greatest scientists have felt humble sometimes; but their general trait has been that of *masterful* inquiry, their faith in their own powers has been as great as their conquests of nature. Had it not been so we should still be scratching earth with bare fingers for roots, nay, we should have been wiped out of the surface of the earth.

"During the Ice Age when human beings were dying of cold and when fire was first discovered, your prototype in that age must have taunted the discoverer with 'What is the use of your schemes, of what avail they are against the power and wrath of God?' The humble have been promised the Kingdom of God hereafter. We do not know whether they will get it, but here on this earth their portion is serfdom. To revert to the main point, your assertion about 'accept the belief and the faith shall come' is too true, terribly true. Much of the religious fanaticism of this world can be traced directly to this kind of teaching. Provided you catch them young enough, and keep at them repeatedly and long enough, you can make a good majority of human beings believe in *anything*. That is how your orthodox Hindu or fanatical Mahomedan is manufactured. There are of course always a small few in either community who will outgrow these beliefs that have been forced upon them. Do you know that if the Hindus and the Mahomedans stopped studying their scriptures until they reached maturity, they would not be such fanatical believers in their dogmas and would cease to quarrel for their sake? Secular education is the remedy for the

Hindu-Muslim riots, but you will not be able to appreciate the solution for you are not made that way.

"Great as our debt is to you for setting an unprecedented example in courage, action and sacrifice in this country, where people have been always *much* afraid, when the final judgment is passed on your work it will be said that your influence gave a great setback to intellectual progress in this country."

I do not know the meaning of boy 'as the word is ordinarily understood', if a twenty-year-old lad is not a boy. Indeed I would call all school-going persons boys and girls irrespective of their ages. But whether the doubting student may be called a boy or a man, my argument must stand. A student is like a soldier (and a soldier may be 40 years old) who may not argue about matters of discipline when he has put himself and chooses to remain under it. A soldier may not remain a unit in his regiment and have the option of doing or not doing things he is asked to do. Similarly a student, no matter how wise or old he is, surrenders when he joins a school or a college the right of rejecting its discipline. Here there is no underrating or despising the intelligence of the student. It is an aid to his intelligence for him to come voluntarily under discipline. But my correspondent willingly bears the heavy yoke of the tyranny of words. He scents 'compulsion' in every act that displeases the doer. But there is compulsion and compulsion. We call self-imposed compulsion self-restraint. We hug it and grow under it. But compulsion to be shunned even at the cost of life is restraint super-imposed upon us against our wills and often with the object of humiliating us and robbing us of our dignity as men and boys if you will. Social restraints generally are healthy and we reject them to our own undoing. Submission to crawling orders is unmanly and cowardly. Worse still is submission to the multitude of passions that crowd round us every moment of our lives ready to hold us their slaves.

But the correspondent has yet another word that holds him in its chains. It is the mighty word 'rationalism'. Well, I had a full dose of it. Experience has humbled me enough to let me realize the specific limitations of reason. Just as matter misplaced becomes dirt, reason misused becomes lunacy. If we would but render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's all would, be well.

Rationalists are admirable beings, rationalism is a hideous monster when it claims for itself omnipotence. Attribution of omnipotence to reason is as bad a piece of idolatry as is worship of stock and stone believing it to be God.

Who has reasoned out the use of prayer? Its use is felt after practice. Such is the world's testimony. Cardinal Newman never surrendered his reason, but he yielded a better place to prayer when he humbly sang 'one step enough for me'. Shankara was a prince among reasoners. There is hardly anything in the world's literature to surpass Shankara's rationalism. But he yielded the first place to prayer and faith.

The correspondent has made a hasty generalization from the fleeting and disturbing events that are happening before us. But everything on this earth lends itself to abuse. It seems to be a law governing everything pertaining to man. No doubt religion has to answer for some of the most terrible crimes in history. But that is the fault not of religion but of the ungovernable brute in man. He has not yet shed the effects of his brute ancestry.

I do not know a single rationalist who has never done anything in simple faith and has based every one of his acts on reason. But we all know millions of human beings living their more or less orderly lives because of their childlike faith in the Maker of us all. That very faith is a prayer. The 'boy' on whose letter I based my article belongs to that vast mass of humanity and the article was written to steady him and his fellow searchers, not to disturb the happiness of rationalists like the correspondent.

But he quarrels even with the bent that is given to the youth of the world by their elders and teachers. But that, it seems, is an inseparable handicap (if it be one) of impressionable age. Purely secular education is also an attempt to mould the young mind after a fashion. The correspondent is good enough to grant that the body and the mind may be trained and directed. Of the soul which makes the body and the mind possible, he has no care, or perhaps he is in doubt as to its existence. But his disbelief cannot avail him. He cannot escape the consequences of his reasoning. For, why may not a believer argue on the correspondent's own ground and say he must influence the

soul of boys and girls even as the others influence the body and the intelligence? The evils of religious instruction will vanish with the evolution of the true religious spirit. To give up religious instruction is like letting a field lie fallow and grow weeds for want of the tiller's knowledge of the proper use of the field.

The correspondent's excursion into the great discoveries of the ancients is really irrelevant to the subject under discussion. No one questions, I do not, the utility or the brilliance of these discoveries. They were generally a proper field for the use and exercise of reason. But they, the ancients, did not delete from their lives the predominant function of faith and prayer. Works without faith and prayer are like an artificial flower that has no fragrance. I plead not for the suppression of reason, but for a due recognition of that in us which sanctifies reason itself.

*Young India*, 14-10-1926

## 26

### SPEECH AT THE BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY

"You have had your say now. No one is listening to you. Why not stop talking of Khaddar?" That was the advice that was being given him in some quarters. "But why should I stop reciting my favourite *mantra*," said Gandhiji, "when I have before me the example of Prahlada of old refusing to give up *Ramanama* in the teeth of tortures worse than death? And I have not had to go through any tortures yet. How can I give up the only message that the condition of my country has been whispering to me? Panditji has collected and has been still collecting lakhs and lakhs of rupees for you from Rajas and Maharajas. The money apparently comes from these wealthy princes, but in reality it comes from the millions of our poor. For unlike Europe the rich of our land grow rich at the expense of our villagers the bulk of whom have to go without a square meal a day. The education that you receive today is thus paid for by the starving villagers who will never have the chance of such an education. It is your duty to refuse to have an education that is not within the reach of the poor, but I do not ask that of you today. I ask you to render just a slight return to the poor

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by doing a little *yajna* for them. For he who eats without doing his *yajna* steals his food, says the *Gita*. The *yajna* that was required of the British civic population during the War was for each household to grow potatoes in its yard and for each household to do a little simple sewing. The *yajna* of our age and for us is the spinning wheel. Day in and day out I have been talking about it, writing about it. I shall say no more today. If the message of the poor of India has touched your hearts, I want you to raid Kripalani's khaddar stores tomorrow and denude it of all their stock, and to empty your pockets tonight. Panditji has cultivated the art of beggary. I have learnt it from him, and if he specializes in laying the princes under tribute, I have learnt to be equally shameless in emptying the pockets of the poor, for the benefit of those who are poorer than they.

“Malaviyaji's one object in begging millions for you, in raising these palatial buildings, is to send out to the country gems of purest ray, citizens healthy and strong to serve their motherland. That purpose will be defeated if you allow yourselves to be swept with the wind that comes today from the West—the wind of impurity. Not that the methods have the general sanction of Europe. There are friends in Europe, a very few, who are fighting hard to counteract the poisonous tendency. But if you do not wake up betimes the immoral wave that is fast gathering strength might soon envelop and overwhelm you. I cry out to you, therefore, with all the strength at my command: ‘Be warned, and flee from the fire before it consumes you.’ ”

*Young India*, 20-1-1927

## CONVOCATION ADDRESS AT THE BIHAR VIDYAPITH

Gandhiji's convocation address was more a long heart-to-heart chat than a speech, although it was addressed not only to the students, but to the public at large. But it was a public whom he well might have taken into confidence, who understood not only the spoken word, but the unspoken language of the heart. It was a talk full of colour and passion and replete with autobiographic references.

He hoped at the outset that the *snatakas* would live in their lives the vows they had solemnly taken that day and said, as he did at the time of the Gujarat Vidyapith Convocation, that the Vidyapith would have more than justified its existence if it turned out even one ideal student and one ideal teacher. For what was the function of these institutions? To discover gems, no matter how few, 'of the purest ray serene'. And he proceeded to give a reminiscence of his South African days: "I lived in South Africa for 20 years, but never once thought of going to see the diamond mines there, partly because I was afraid lest as an 'untouchable' I should be refused admission and insulted. But when Gokhale was there I felt it my duty to show him the chief industry of the place. There was no fear of his being insulted. So we went to the biggest mine there, and saw scenes which I have not forgotten. Mountains upon mountains of excavated earth and stone and no diamonds. It was after millions were sunk in excavating millions of tons of earth and stone that a handful of precious stones could be discovered. And when Cullinan, the owner, discovered the stone named after him — a stone larger than the one which adorned the crown of the Czar and the Kohinoor — after years of labour and millions of pounds had been spent on it, you might imagine his joy. He felt that his lifework was done. If we should not grudge to spend any amount of labour and capital on a thing which had but an artificial value, how much should be spent on excavating jewels from the human mine? Let us work away in that spirit." That was an apt simile apter than Ruskin used when he coined that



phrase 'manufacture of souls'. That manufacture is only in God's power. We human mortals have but to discover what is already there hidden by God.

He then referred to the positive and negative aspects of all non-co-operating institutions. The negative which consisted of withdrawal of all connection with Government had been already achieved by the existing institutions. When he thought of the number of students and teachers that he had called out, he felt not the slightest regret. Nor did he feel repentant for the fact that many of these had gone back, that many were discontented and unhappy. He felt sorry for them, they had his deep sympathy, but regret or repentance he had none. "These troubles and sorrows are our daily lot, should be our daily lot. If observance of truth was a bed of roses, if truth cost one nothing and was all happiness and ease, there would be no beauty about it. We must adhere to truth even if the heavens should fall. What matters it, if by following truth we were to lose the whole world including even India? We shall be true votaries of truth only if we follow it to death, in the conviction that under God we will get back the things we hold dear including India. I know that a large number of our teachers and professors are restless, a few are starving. That is true penance necessary for a proper cleansing of the national atmosphere."

the shape of Western culture ! Let us not abuse him for having unintentionally worked our ruin. As a result of English being the medium of instruction, we have lost all originality. We have become birds without wings. The most we aspire to is a clerkship or editorship. One of us may under the system be a Lord Sinha, but every one at best is designed to be part of the huge foreign machine. At Muzaffarpur a boy came and asked me if by going to a national school he could one day be a *Latsaheb*. I said, 'No, you can be a village *lat*, but not a Lord Sinha. Only Lord Birkenhead can make you that.'

He referred to the craze for more and more palatial buildings raised out of the money of the poor, and raised for the purpose of giving an education which was denied to the poor. "I had an occasion to visit the Economic Institute at Allahabad. As Prof. Jevons showed me over it and I was told that it had cost Rs. 30 lakhs (if my memory serves me right), I shuddered. You could not raise these palaces but by starving millions. Look at New Delhi which tells the same tale. Look at the grand improvements in first and second class carriages on railways. The whole trend is to think of the privileged few and to neglect the poor. If this is not satanic, what is it ? If I must tell the truth, I can say nothing less. I have no quarrel with those who conceived the system. They could not do otherwise. How is an elephant to think for an ant ? As Sir Leppel Griffen once put it in his speech as member of the South African Deputation, only the toad under the harrow knows where it pinches. The arrangement of our affairs is in their hands and with the best will in the world, the best of them could not order our affairs as well as we could. For theirs is a diametrically opposite conception to ours. They think in the terms of the privileged few. We must think in the terms of the teeming millions."

And that naturally led him on to the *charkha* which he said should be the very pivot and centre of all our arrangements.

"Let the *snatakas* take their degrees, learn anything they like, but let it centre round the *charkha*, let their economics and their science subserve the purpose of the *charkha*. Do not relegate the *charkha* to an odd corner. The *charkha* is the sun of the solar system of our activities. Without it *Vidyapiths* are *Vidyapiths* in name. Lord Irvin told God's truth when he said that for any advancement through the Councils we should look

to the British Parliament. Let us not be angry with him. He cannot think but in the terms of the Parliament. The sun of his system is London, the sun of our system is the *charkha*. I may be mistaken in this, but, so far as I am not convinced of the mistake, I shall treasure it. The *charkha* at any rate is incapable of harming anybody and without it we, and if I may say so, even the world, will go to rack and ruin. We know what Europe has been feeling after the war in which lies were propagated as the highest religion. The world is weary of the after-effects of the war and even as the *charkha* is India's comforter today, it may be the world's tomorrow, because it stands not for the greatest good of the greatest number but for the greatest good of all. Whenever I see an erring man, I say to myself I have also erred; when I see a lustful man I say to myself, so was I once; and in this way I feel kinship with every one in the world and feel that I cannot be happy without the humblest of us being happy. It is in this sense that I want you to make the *charkha* the centre of your studies. Just as Prahlada saw Rama everywhere and Tulsidas could see nothing but Rama even in the image of Krishna, let all your learning be directed to realizing the implications of the *charkha*. Our science, our carpentry, our economics should all be utilized for making the *charkha* the prop and mainstay of our poorest. I know in the Gujarat Vidyapith we have not yet succeeded in doing it, you are not doing it. I am not saying this in a spirit of complaint. I am simply pouring out the agony of my heart. May you all understand it."

*Young India*, 10-2-1927

## TO THE STUDENTS OF POONA

The students had gathered in their thousands, some of them possibly to have the fun of it, others to listen to the message, but they waited patiently until, thanks to the faulty arrangement of the programme, Gandhiji could appear before them at about midnight. The cry for 'English', 'English' was there — heard for the first time from students during our tour this year. And Gandhiji, pained as he was by it, acceded to the demand because of his overflowing love for the students. "If I cannot make myself understood" said he, "to Poona students, it is my misfortune, the misfortune of my country, and shall I say your misfortune?" But he acceded to the students' clamour for English only so far as he had to express his regret for being late at the meeting. Even that little concession had won over the audience to him, and they had begun to listen with rapt attention. When he saw that he had succeeded in gaining their ear, he delivered the message itself in Hindi.

"It is possible," said he, "that my message if delivered in English might get more silver from you, and it is probable that you might understand me better. But I hold my message to be far superior to myself and far superior to the vehicle through which it is expressed. It has a power all its own, and I hope it will produce an impression on the youth of India. Whether it will produce an impression in my lifetime or not, I do not care, but my faith is immovable, and as the days roll on and as the agony of the masses becomes prolonged, it will burn itself into the heart of every Indian who has a heart to respond to the message. You must understand, that at a time of my life when I should be enjoying my well-earned rest, I am not going about from one end of the country to the other for nothing. It is because I feel within myself with increasing force every day the strength of my conviction that I must try until the end of my days to reach it to as many ears and hearts as possible." The rest was a brief history of the *charkha* movement — which he had conceived as early as 1908 before he had actually seen a *charkha*, and the duty of the student world to those at the cost of whose moral and material ruin they were

receiving their education. "You may, if you will, go on receiving that education, but do at least make a decent return for it. I know you have not taken to *khadi*, not because you are perverse, but because you lack the conviction that there is anything like the stupendous problem of poverty and unemployment, whose existence I have been declaring from the house-tops. The king of Siam refused to believe Lord Curzon when he said to him that he was coming from a country where rivers were frozen for a part of the year. I assure you I am describing to you conditions I have seen with my own eyes when I say that 30 million people in our land have to go without a decent meal a day."

The rest of the speech was on *brahmacharya*, a thing that comes uppermost to Gandhiji's lips whenever he finds himself amongst students. "It is as easy as it appears to be difficult," said he rubbing the thing home into them, "for *brahmacharya* is a quality of the soul, and your souls are not dead but slumbering. They are only waiting to be aroused. It seems difficult to arouse them because we have become unbelievers. It will be easy as soon as you have faith, for with faith comes God's grace. Then it no longer remains a matter of effort and trouble, but of joy and peace. I tell you this as I have known the joy of it."

*Young India*, 24-3-1927

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### STUDENTS IN CONFERENCE

The secretary of the sixth Sindh Students' Conference sent me a printed circular asking for a message. I received a wire also asking for the same thing. But being in a somewhat inaccessible place, both circular letter and the telegram were received too late for me to send a message. Nor am I in a position to comply with numerous requests for messages, articles and what not. But as I profess to be interested in everything connected with students as I am somewhat in touch with the student world all over India, I could not help criticizing within myself the programme sketched in the circular letter. Thinking that it might be helpful, I reduce some of it to writing and present it to the student world. I take the following from the

circular letter which by the way is badly printed and contains mistakes which are hardly pardonable for a students' society :

"The organizers of this Conference are endeavouring their utmost to make this Conference as interesting and instructive as possible. ....We intend organizing a series of educational discourses and we request you to give us the benefit..... The problem of female education here in Sindh deserves a special consideration.....We are not blind to the other necessities of students. Sports competitions are being organized and along with elocution competitions they will, it is hoped, make the Conference more interesting. Nor have we eliminated drama and music from our programme.....Pieces in Urdu and English will also be staged."

I have not omitted a single operative sentence that would give one an idea of what the Conference was expected to do, and yet one fails to find a single reference to things of permanent interest to the student world. I have no doubt that the dramatic and musical and gymnastic performances were all provided on a "grand scale". I take the phrase in inverted commas from the circular. I have no doubt also that the Conference had attractive papers on female education. But so far as the circular is concerned, there is no mention of the disgraceful *deti leti* (dowry) practices, from which the students have not freed themselves and which in many respects make the lives of Sindhi girls a hell upon earth and of parents of daughters a torture. There is nothing in the circular to show, that the Conference intended to tackle the question of the morals of the students. Nor is there anything to show, that the Conference was to do anything to show the students the way to become fearless nation-builders. It is a matter of no small credit to Sindh that it is supplying so many institutions with brilliant professors, but more is always expected from those who give much. And I, who have every reason to be grateful to Sindhi friends for giving me fine co-workers for the Gujarat Vidyapith, am not going to be satisfied with getting professors and *khadi* workers. Sindh has got its Sadhu Vaswani. It can boast of a number of great reformers. But the students will put themselves in the wrong, if they will be contented with appropriation of the merit gained by the *sadhus* and reformers of Sindh. They have got to become nation-builders. The base imitation of the West, the ability to speak and write correct and polished English, will

not add one brick to the temple of freedom. The student world, which is receiving an education far too expensive for starving India, an education which only a microscopic minority can ever hope to receive, is expected to qualify itself for it by giving its life-blood to the nation. Students must become pioneers in conservative reform, conserving all that is good in the nation and fearlessly ridding society of the innumerable abuses that have crept into it.

These conferences should open the eyes of students to the realities before them. They should result in making them think of things which, in the class room adapted to its foreign setting, they do not get an opportunity of learning. They may not be able in these conferences to discuss questions regarded as purely political. But they can and they must study and discuss social and economic questions which are as important to our generation as the highest political question. A nation-building programme can leave no part of the nation untouched. Students have to react upon the dumb millions. They have to learn to think not in terms of a province, or a town, or a class, or a caste, but in terms of a continent and of the millions who include untouchables, drunkards, hooligans and even prostitutes, for whose existence in our midst every one of us is responsible. Students in olden times were called *brahmacharis*, that is those who walked with and in the fear of God. They were honoured by kings and elders. They were a voluntary charge on the nation, and in return they gave to the nation a hundredfold strong souls, strong brains, strong arms. Students in the modern world, wherever they are to be found among fallen nations, are considered to be their hope, and have become the self-sacrificing leaders of reforms in every department. Not that we have no such examples in India; but they are far too few. What I plead for is that students' conferences should stand for this kind of organized work befitting the status of *brahmacharis*.

*Young India*, 9-6-1927

## TO ADI KARNATAKA BOYS

"I was distressed, my boys, to find that you were forgetting your simple habits, and were reluctant to part with your pocket money for the sake of your brethren. I assure you that my father gave me no pocket money, and in no other part of India boys of the middle class are treated like you. But the State does not house and feed and educate you in order that you may learn idleness and forget simplicity and self-help. You must learn to wash your own clothes, cook your own food, and do all your work yourselves. And may I tell you? As I look at you I feel as though you were all foreigners. Can you tell me why?" The best amongst the students immediately answered: "Because we are wearing foreign cloth." "That is very good. Now there is no reason why you should not be wearing *khadi*, every one of you. I tell you I could give you for one-fourth the price much cleaner caps than you are wearing now. The circumstance that your superiors or your teachers do not wear *khadi* need not deter you. You will not drink liquor, or eat beef or carrion, because your parents or other Adi Karnatakas do so. You will on the contrary give up all these things, and insist on your superintendent providing you with *khadi* clothes, telling him that in case they are dear you would gladly curtail part of your cloth rations. You must know that there are in the country millions of children who do not get the education that you get, who do not get not only the pocket money you get, but not even enough food that your pocket money could buy them. I want you for their sake to wear *khadi* and to learn to spin. Go to the Exhibition and see what it has to teach you."

*Young India*, 14-7-1927



## SPEECH AT BANGALORE

The ancient word for a *vidyarthi* (student) was *brahmachari*, because all his study and activity had as their objective the search of Brahman, and he built his life on a sure foundation of stoic simplicity and self-restraint, which every religion has enjoined on the student. He who let the reins of his passions and desires loose in his youth was never able to curb them in his old age. I do not want you to eschew play and confine yourselves to the closet. But let all your work and play have the exalted objective of a life of restraint, let them take you nearer to God.

*Young India*, 21-7-1927

## SPEECH AT SCIENCE INSTITUTE, BANGALORE

"I was wondering where do I come in?" he exclaimed with a sigh. "There is no place here for a rustic like me who has to stand speechless in awe and wonderment. I am not in a mood to say much. All I can say is, that all these huge laboratories and electrical apparatus you see here are due to the labour, — unwilling and forced, — of millions. For Tata's thirty lakhs did not come from outside, nor does the Mysore contribution come from anywhere else but this *begar* world. If we were to meet the villagers and to explain to them, how we are utilizing their money on buildings and plants which will never benefit them, but might perhaps benefit their posterity, they will not understand it. They will turn a cold shoulder. But we never take them into our confidence, we take it as a matter of right, and forget that the rule of 'no taxation without representation' applies to them too. If you will really apply it to them, and realize your responsibility to render them an account, you will see that there is another side to all these appointments. You will then find not a little but a big corner in your hearts for them, and if you will keep it in a good nice condition, you will

utilize your knowledge for the benefit of the millions on whose labour your education depends. I shall utilize the purse you have given me for *Daridranarayana*. The real *Daridranarayana* even I have not seen, but know only through my imagination. Even the spinners who will get this money are not the real *Daridranarayana* who lives in remote corners of distant villages which have yet to be explored. I was told by your professor, that the properties of some of the chemicals will take years of experiments to explore. But who will try to explore these villages? Just as some of the experiments in your laboratories go on for all the twenty-four hours, let the big corner in your heart remain perpetually warm for the benefit of the poor millions.

“I expect far more from you than from the ordinary man in the street. Don't be satisfied with having given the little you have done, and say, ‘We have done what we could, let us now play tennis and billiards.’ I tell you, in the billiard room and on the tennis court think of the big debt that is being piled against you from day to day. But beggars cannot be choosers. I thank you for what you have given me. Think of the prayer I have made and translate it into action. Don't be afraid of wearing the cloth the poor women make for you, don't be afraid of your employers showing you the door if you wear *khadi*. I would like you to be men, and stand up before the world firm in your convictions. Let your zeal for the dumb millions be not stifled in the search for wealth. I tell you, you can devise a far greater wireless instrument, which does not require external research, but internal, — and all research will be useless if it is not allied to internal research, — which can link your hearts with those of the millions. Unless all the discoveries that you make have the welfare of the poor as the end in view, all your workshops will be really no better than Satan's workshops, as Rajagopalachari said in joke. Well, I have given you enough food for thought, if you are in a reflective mood, as all research students ought to be.”

*Young India*, 21-7-1927

## SPEECH AT MYSORE

I have come in contact with thousands of students during the last ten years. They have confided their innermost secrets to me and have given me the right to enter their hearts. I know therefore all your difficulties and every one of your weaknesses. I do not know whether I can render any effective help to you. I can but be your friend and guide, attempt to share your sorrows, and give you the benefit of my experience, though you must know that the only Help of the helpless is God. There is no greater punishment or misery for man than that his faith in God should be blasted. And I confess to a deep sense of sorrow that faith is gradually disappearing in the student world. When I suggest to a Hindu boy to have recourse to *Ramanama*, he stares at me and wonders who Rama may be ; when I ask a Mussulman boy to read the *Koran* and fear God, he confesses his inability to read the *Koran* and Allah is a mere lip-profession. How can I convince such boys that the first step to a true education is a pure heart ? If the education you get turns you away from God, I do not know how it is going to help you and how you are going to help the world. You were right in saying in your address, that I am endeavouring to see God through service of humanity, for I know that God is neither in heaven, nor down below, but in every one, be he a Hindu, Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra, or a *Panchama*, a Mussulman, a Parsi, a Christian,—man or woman.

*Young India*, 4-8-1927

## SPEECH AT VANIVILAS SCHOOL, MYSORE

If this institution presents India with some heroines, some genuine workers, who will not be lost to the society but who will dedicate themselves to its service, I should be delighted. If after receiving this costly education you give me the slip and straightway marry away and disappear from the horizon, you will have deceived the country. Not that you may not marry. But whether you are married or unmarried, don't be slaves, but do what the country demands of you. You should be the incarnation of mercy and bravery, and go about in the world with the sure shield of purity ever protecting you, ever above temptation and without fear.

*Young India*, 11-8-1927

## STUDENTS AND THE GITA

The other day, in course of a conversation, a missionary friend asked me, if India was really a spiritually advanced country, why it was that he found only a few students having any knowledge of their own religion, even of the *Bhagavadgita*. In support of the statement, the friend who is himself an educationist told me, that he had made it a point to ask the students he met whether they had any knowledge of their religion or of the *Bhagavadgita*. A vast majority of them were found to be innocent of any such knowledge.

I do not propose to take up at the present moment the inference, that because certain students had no knowledge of their own religion, India was not a spiritually advanced country, beyond saying that the ignorance on the part of the students of religious books did not necessarily mean absence of all religious life or want of spirituality among the people to which the students belonged. But there is no doubt, that the vast majority of students who pass through the Government educational institutions are devoid of any religious instruction. The

remark of the missionary had reference to the Mysore students, and I was somewhat pained to observe that even the students of Mysore had no religious instruction in the State schools. I know also that there is a school of thought which believes in only secular instruction being given in public schools. I know also that in a country like India, where there are most religions of the world represented and where there are so many denominations in the same religion, there must be difficulty about making provision for religious instruction. But if India is not to declare spiritual bankruptcy, religious instruction of its youth must be held to be at least as necessary as secular instruction. It is true, that knowledge of religious books is no equivalent of that of religion. But if we cannot have religion we must be satisfied with providing our boys and girls with what is next best. And whether there is such instruction given in the schools or not, grown up students must cultivate the art of self-help about matters religious as about other. They may start their own class just as they have their debating and now spinners' clubs.

Addressing the Collegiate High School students at Shimoga, I found upon enquiry at the meeting that out of a hundred or more Hindu boys, there were hardly eight who had read the *Bhagavadgita*. None raised his hand in answer to the question, whether of the few who had read the *Gita* there was any who understood it. Out of five or six Mussulman boys all raised their hands as having read the *Koran*. But only one could say that he knew its meaning. The *Gita* is, in my opinion, a very easy book to understand. It does present some fundamental problems which are no doubt difficult of solution. But the general trend of the *Gita* is in my opinion unmistakable. It is accepted by all Hindu sects as authoritative. It is free from any form of dogma. In a short compass it gives a complete reasoned moral code. It satisfies both the intellect and the heart. It is thus both philosophical and devotional. Its appeal is universal. The language is incredibly simple. But I nevertheless think that there should be an authoritative version in each vernacular, and the translations should be so prepared as to avoid technicalities and in a manner that would make the teaching of the *Gita* intelligible to the average man. The suggestion is not intended in any way to supplement the original. For I

reiterate my opinion that every Hindu boy and girl should know Sanskrit. But for a long time to come, there will be millions without any knowledge of Sanskrit. It would be suicidal to keep them deprived of the teachings of the *Bhagavadgita* because they do not know Sanskrit.

*Young India*, 25-8-1927

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## WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO \*

**A Common Feature**

I thank all the students and others for the address that has been presented to me this afternoon and the purse for the *khadi* fund. This demonstration of your personal affection for me and your identification with the poorest of the land does not surprise me now, because it has become a common feature wherever I go, throughout the length and breadth of our beautiful country. It has been a matter of the greatest joy to me and consolation, in the face of many difficulties, to find that the student world throughout India has a warm corner for me in their hearts. The students have lightened my burden to a very great extent. But I cannot suppress from me the feeling that in spite of this personal affection that the students have shown to me everywhere and even identification with the poorest of the land, the students have yet to cover a vast amount of ground. For you are the hope of the future. You will be called upon, when you are discharged from your colleges and schools, to enter upon public life to lead the poor people of this country. I would therefore like you, students, to have sense of your responsibility and show it in a much more tangible manner. It is a remarkable fact and a regrettable fact that in the case of the vast majority of students, whilst they entertain noble impulses during their student days, these disappear when they finish their studies. The vast majority of them look out for loaves and fishes. Surely, there is something wrong in this. There is one reason which is obvious. Every educationist, every one

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\* Speech delivered on receiving an address from the students of Vellore.

who has had anything to do with the students, has realized that our educational system is faulty. It does not correspond to the requirements of the country, certainly not to the requirements of pauper India. There is no correspondence between the education that is given and the home life and the village life. But that is, I fear, a larger question than you and I can deal with in a meeting of this character.

### **The One Indispensable Condition**

Taking things as they are, we have to consider what is possible for the students to do and what more we can do in order to serve the country. The answer that has come to me and to many, who are eager to see that the student world gives a good account of itself, is that the students have to search within and look after their personal character. Purity of personal life is the one indispensable condition for building a sound education. And my meetings with thousands of students and the correspondence which I continuously have with the students in which they pour out their innermost feelings and take me into their confidence show me quite clearly that there is much left to be desired. I am sure that all of you understand thoroughly what I mean. In our languages there is a beautiful word, equivalent for the word student, that is, *brahmachari*. And I hope you know what the word *brahmachari* means. It means searcher after God, one who conducts himself so as to bring himself nearest to God in the least possible time. And all the great religions of the world, however much they may differ, are absolutely one on this fundamental thing that no man or woman with an impure heart can possibly appear before the Great White Throne. All our learning or recitation of the *Vedas*, correct knowledge of Sanskrit, Latin, Greek and what not will avail us nothing if they do not enable us to cultivate absolute purity of heart. The end of all knowledge must be building up of character.

### **Do not Lose Faith**

An English friend in Shimoga, whom I did not know before, came up to me and asked me, why it was, if India was really a spiritually advanced country, he did not observe in the students a real yearning after knowledge of God, why was it that the students, many of them, did not even know what the

*Bhagavadgita* was. I gave what appeared to me an honest explanation and excuse for this discovery of his. But I do not propose to give that explanation to you nor seek to excuse this very great and grave defect. The very first and earnest request that I would make to the students before me here is that each one of you should search within, and wherever you find that my remarks are justified, you will begin to reform and rebuild yourself, and those of you who are Hindus, and the vast majority are Hindus I know, will endeavour to understand the very simple, beautiful, and to me soulful message of the *Gita*. The experience, and I think I can say the experience, without a single exception, of those who have really carried on this search after truth to render their hearts pure is that it is an utterly impossible effort, unless it is accompanied by a heart prayer to the Almighty. Whatever, therefore, you do, do not lose faith in God. I cannot reason out the thing for you, because really speaking, it is a fact which transcends reason. But I want you to cultivate a spirit of real humility and not summarily reject the experiences of so many teachers, *rishis* and others of the world and not regard them as so many superstitious men. And if you will but do this, all the rest that I want to say will be as clear as crystal to you. This will be to me the test of your sincerity of profession. If you have real faith in God, you cannot but feel for the humblest of His creation. And whether it is the spinning wheel and *khadi*, or untouchability, or total prohibition, or social reform in connection with child-widows and child-wives and many other similar things, you will find that all these activities are derived from the same source. I was therefore glad to find that you sympathize with and approve of the spinning movement, the struggle against untouchability and other things with which I am identified. I accept your assurance that henceforth you will do better in regard to *khadi*.

### The Easiest Thing

It is really the easiest thing in the world for you to make your choice once for all and say to yourself that you shall use henceforth nothing but *khadi* since it puts a few coppers into the pockets of those who need them most. In this one institution alone, I understand, you are more than 1,400. Just think what the 1,400 by giving only half an hour to spinning can add



materially to the wealth of the country. Think also what 1,400 can do on behalf of the so-called untouchables, and if all the 1,400 young men were to make a solemn resolve, and they can do so, that they are not going to have anything whatever to do with child-wives, imagine what a great reform you will make in society around you. If the 1,400 amongst you, or a respectable number even devote your leisure hours or part of your Sundays to going amidst those who are given to drink and in the kindest manner possible steal into their hearts, imagine what service you will render to them and to the country. All these things you can do in spite of the existing faulty education. Nor do you require much effort for doing these things except that you have got to change your heart, and to use a current expression in the political world, alter the 'angle of vision'.

### **Solemn Circumstance**

And I want you to turn this occasion to advantage, and you will do so, if only you will consider the solemn circumstance under which we have met this evening and by reference to which I started my address. A mere man of the world would be justified, and he will be held justified by the world, if he excused himself from attending a function of this character on account of domestic affliction. Surely there is something noble and majestic when a man, instead of brooding over such sorrows, transmutes them into service for God and humanity. Every such act enables us to understand the essential oneness of humanity. May God enable you to understand the words that I have spoken to you. I thank you once more for your address and the purse and all that you have said.

*Young India, 8-9-1927*

## THE STUDENTS' SHARE \*

**Meaning of the Purse**

I thank you sincerely for all the gifts you have given me for *Daridranarayana*. This is not the first time I enter this Hall. It was in 1896 that I entered this Hall in connection with the struggle in South Africa. Dr. Subramania Aiyar of revered memory presided at the function. The reason why I recall this meeting is that I made the acquaintance of the students of India then for the first time. As you may know I am a matriculate, and therefore never had any college education worth the name in India. But when after the address was finished and the thanksgiving completed I went out to students who were lying in wait for me and took away from me all the copies of the green pamphlet that I was then circulating throughout India, and it was for the sake of those students that I asked the late Mr. G. Parmeshwaran Pillai, who befriended the cause and me as no one else did, to print copies and circulate them. With supreme pleasure he printed 10,000 copies of the pamphlet. Such was the demand on the part of the students for understanding the situation in South Africa and it pleased me immensely, and I said to myself, "Yes, India may be proud of her children and may base all her hopes upon them." Since that time my acquaintance with students has been growing in volume and intensity. As I said in Bangalore, more is expected from those who give much, and since you have given me so much you have also given me the right to expect much more. I shall never be satisfied with all that you could give me. You have endorsed some of the work that it has been my privilege to do. You have mentioned with affection and reverence in your address the name of *Daridranarayana* and you, Sir (Principal), have — and I have no doubt with utmost sincerity — endorsed the claim that I have made on behalf of the spinning wheel. Many of my distinguished and learned countrymen, I know, have rejected that claim, saying that little bit of a wheel which was

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\* Speech delivered at the Pachiappa College, Madras.

happily put away by our sisters and our mothers could never lead to the attainment of Swaraj. And yet you have endorsed that claim and pleased me immensely. Though you, students, have not said as much in your address, yet you have said sufficient in it to warrant the belief that you have in your hearts a real corner for the spinning wheel. Let not therefore this purse be the first and last demonstration of your affection for the spinning wheel. I tell you it would be an embarrassment for me if it is the last demonstration of your affection ; for I shall have no use for the money if the *khadi* that may be produced through the distribution of that money amongst the starving millions is not used by you. After all a lip profession of faith in the *charkha* and the throwing of a few rupees at me in a patronizing manner won't bring Swaraj and won't solve the problem of the ever-deepening poverty of the toiling and starving millions. I want to correct myself. I have said toiling millions. I wish that it was a true description. Unfortunately, as we have not revised our tastes about clothing we have made it impossible for these starving millions to toil throughout the year. We have imposed upon them a vacation, which they do not need, for at least four months in the year. This is not a figment of my imagination, but it is a truth repeated by many English administrators, if you reject the testimony of your own countrymen who have moved in the midst of these masses. So then if I take this purse away and distribute it amongst the starving sisters, it does not solve the question. On the contrary it will impoverish their soul. They will become beggars and get into the habit of living upon charity. Heaven help the man, the woman or the nation that learns to live on charity. What you and I want to do is to provide work for those sisters of ours, living protected in their own homes, and this is the only work that you can provide them with. It is dignified and honest work, and it is good enough work. One anna may mean nothing to you. You will throw it away in getting into a tram car and lazily passing your time instead of taking exercise for 2, 3, 4 or 5 miles as the case may be. But when it finds its way into the pockets of one poor sister it fructifies. She labours for it and she gives me beautiful yarn spun by her sacred hands, a yarn that has a history behind it. It is a thread worth weaving a garment out of for princes and potentates. A piece of calico from a mill has no such history

behind it. I must not detain you over this one theme, great as it is for me, and though it engrosses practically the whole of my time. This purse of yours will not be a help but a hindrance to me if it is not an earnest of your determination henceforth if you have not it already, that you are not going to wear anything else but *khadi*.

Let me not be deluded into the belief that you believe in this gospel of *khadi*, because you give me the purse and because you applaud me. I want you to act up to your profession. I do not want it to be said of you, — the salt of India, — that you gave this money merely to bamboozle me, that you do not want to wear *khadi* and that you have no belief in it. Do not fulfil the prophecy that had been made by a distinguished son of Tamil Nad and a friend of mine. He has said that when I die I will not need any other firewood to reduce my corpse to ashes but the wood that will be collected out of the spinning wheels that I am now distributing. He has no faith in the *charkha* and he thinks that those who utter the name of the *charkha* do so merely out of respect for me. It is an honest opinion. It will be a great national tragedy if the *khadi* movement turns out to be that and you will have been direct contributors to the tragedy and participators in that crime. It will be a national suicide. If you have no living faith in the *charkha* reject it. It would be a true demonstration of your love, you will open my eyes and I shall go about my way crying hoarse in the wilderness: "You have rejected the *charkha* and thereby you have rejected *Daridra-narayana*." But save me and save yourselves the pain, the degradation and the humiliation that await us if there is any delusion or camouflage about this. This is one thing. But there are many things more in your address.

### **Brahmanism or Animalism**

You have mentioned there child-marriage and child-widows. A learned Tamilian has written to me to address students on child-widows. He has said that the hardships of child-widows in this Presidency are far greater than those of child-widows in other parts of India. I have not been able to test the truth of this statement. You should know that better than I do. But what I would like you, young men around me, to do is that you should have a touch of chivalry about you.

If you have that, I have a great suggestion to offer. I hope the majority of you are unmarried, and a fair number of you are also *brahmacharis*. I have to say 'a fair number' because I know students; a student who casts his lustful eyes upon his sister is not a *brahmachari*. I want you to make this sacred resolve that you are not going to marry a girl who is not a widow, you will seek out a widow-girl and if you cannot get a widow-girl you are not going to marry at all. Make that determination, announce it to the world, announce it to your parents if you have them or to your sisters. I call them widow-girls by way of correction because I believe that a child ten or fifteen years old, who was no consenting party to the so-called marriage, who having married, having never lived with the so-called husband, is suddenly declared to be a widow, is not a widow. It is an abuse of the term, abuse of language and a sacrilege. The word "widow" in Hinduism has a sacred odour about it. I am a worshipper of a true widow like the late Mrs. Ramabai Ranade who knew what it was to be a widow. But a child 9 years old knows nothing of what a husband should be. If it is not true that there are such child-widows in the Presidency, then my case falls to the ground. But if there are such child-widows, it becomes your sacred duty to make the determination to marry a girl-widow if you want to rid ourselves of this curse. I am superstitious enough to believe that all such sins that a nation commits react upon it physically. I believe that all these sins of ours have accumulated together to reduce us to a state of slavery. You may get the finest constitution that is conceivable dropping upon you from the House of Commons. It will be worthless if there are not men and women fit enough to work that constitution. Do you suppose that we can possibly call ourselves men worthy of ruling ourselves or others or shaping the destiny of a nation containing 30 crores so long as there is one single widow who wishes to fulfil her fundamental wants but is violently prevented from doing so? It is not religion, but irreligion. I say that, saturated as I am with the spirit of Hinduism. Do not make the mistake that it is the Western spirit in me that is speaking. I claim to be full to overflowing with the spirit of India undefiled. I have assimilated many things from the West but not this. There is no warrant for this kind of widowhood in Hinduism.

All I have said about child-widows necessarily applies to child-wives. You must be able surely to control your lust to this extent, that you are not going to marry a girl that is under 16 years of age. If I could do so I would lay down 20 as the minimum. Twenty years is early enough even in India. It is we who are responsible for the precocity of girls, not even the Indian climate, because I know girls of the age of 20 who are pure and undefiled and able to stand the storm that may rage round. Let us not hug that precocity to ourselves. Some Brahman students tell me that they cannot follow this principle, that they cannot get Brahman girls sixteen years old, very few Brahmans keep their daughters unmarried till that age, the Brahman girls are married mostly before 10, 12 and 13 years. Then I say to the Brahman youth, "Cease to be a Brahman, if you cannot possibly control yourself. Choose a grown up girl of 16 who became a widow when she was a child. If you cannot get a Brahman widow who has reached that age, then go and take any girl you like. And I tell you that the God of the Hindus will pardon that boy who has preferred to marry out of his caste rather than ravish a girl of twelve. When your heart is not pure and you cannot master your passions, you cease to be an educated man. You have called your institution a premier institution. I want you to live up to the name of the premier institution which must produce boys who will occupy the front rank in character. And what is education without character and what is character without elementary personal purity? Brahmanism I adore. I have defended *Varnashrama Dharma*. But Brahmanism that can tolerate untouchability, virgin widowhood, spolia-tion of virgins, stinks in my nostrils. It is a parody of Brahmanism. There is no knowledge of Brahman therein. There is no true interpretation of the scriptures. It is undiluted animalism. Brahmanism is made of sterner stuff. I want these few remarks of mine to go deep down into your hearts. I am watching the boys whilst I am speaking, and it hurts me to hear a single giggle whilst I am pouring out my heart. I have not come to appeal to your intellects but to your hearts. You are the hope of the country and what I have said is of primary importance for you.

### Evil of Smoking

In response to the request of a Calicut professor I shall now

proceed to say something about cigarette smoking and coffee and tea drinking. These are not necessities of life. There are some who manage to take ten cups of coffee a day. Is it necessary for their healthy development and for keeping them awake for the performance of their duties? If it is necessary to take coffee or tea to keep them awake, let them not drink coffee or tea but go to sleep. We must not become slaves to these things. But the majority of the people who drink coffee or tea are slaves to them. Cigars and cigarettes, whether foreign or indigenous, must be avoided. Cigarette smoking is like an opiate and the cigars that you smoke have a touch of opium about them. They get to your nerves and you cannot leave them afterwards. How can a single student foul his mouth by converting it into a chimney? If you give up these habits of smoking cigars and cigarettes and drinking coffee and tea you will find out for yourselves how much you are able to save. A drunkard in Tolstoy's story is hesitating to execute his design of murder so long as he has not smoked his cigar. But he puffs it, and then gets up smiling and saying, 'What a coward am I!' takes the dagger and does the deed. Tolstoy spoke from experience. He has written nothing without having had personal experience of it. And he is much more against cigars and cigarettes than against drink. But do not make the mistake that between drink and tobacco, drink is a lesser evil. No. If cigarette is Beelzebub, then drink is Satan.

### Hindi

Speaking next about Hindi, he said: There is the Hindi Prachar Office supported by people in the North. They have spent nearly a lakh of rupees and the Hindi teachers have been doing their work regularly. Some progress has been made but we have yet to make substantial progress. You can all learn Hindi in one year provided you give one hour a day. You can understand simple Hindi in six months. I can't speak to you in Hindi because most of you do not know it. Hindi should be made the universal tongue in India. You should know also Sanskrit, for then you will be able to read the *Bhagavadgita*. As students of a premier Hindu institution, you ought to be taught the *Bhagavadgita*. I would expect Mussulman boys also to read in this institution. (A voice: No *Panchama* is admitted). This is a discovery to me. This institution should be flung

open to *Panchamas* and Mussulmans. I would de-Hinduize this institution if a *Panchama* has no entry here. (Hear, hear). The fact that this is a Hindu institution is no reason why a Mussulman or a *Panchama* could not receive education here. I think it is high time that the trustees revise their constitution. This is a petition from me, an earnest and a very God-fearing Hindu, saturated with the spirit of Hinduism, not from a petti-fogging reformer, but from one who is trying to live the best in Hinduism. Mr. Principal, you will please convey this petition to the proper quarters, and it will be a great joy to me to hear during my sojourn in this Presidency that my petition has been heard. I thank you for listening to this message.

*Young India*, 15-9-1927

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## HINDU STUDENTS AND THE GITA \*

You state in your address that you read the Gospels daily even as I do. I cannot say that I read the Gospels daily, but I can say that I have read the Gospels in a humble and prayerful spirit, and it is well with you if you are also reading the Gospels in that spirit. But I expect that the vast majority of you are Hindu boys. I wish that you could have said to me that at least your Hindu boys were reading the *Bhagavadgita* daily to derive inspiration. For I believe that all the great religions of the world are true more or less. I say 'more or less' because I believe that everything that the human hand touches, by reason of the very fact that human beings are imperfect, becomes imperfect. Perfection is the exclusive attribute of God and it is indescribable, untranslatable. I do believe that it is possible for every human being to become perfect even as God is perfect. It is necessary for us all to aspire after perfection, but when that blessed state is attained, it becomes indescribable, indefinable. And I therefore admit, in all humility, that even the *Vedas*, the *Koran* and the Bible are the imperfect word of God, and imperfect beings that we are, swayed to and fro by a multitude of passions, it is impossible for us even to understand this

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\* From an address to the Mannargudi students.



word of God in its fulness, and so I say to a Hindu boy, that he must not uproot the traditions in which he has been brought up, as I say to a Mussulman or a Christian boy that he must not uproot his traditions. And so whilst I would welcome your learning the Gospels and your learning the *Koran*, I would certainly insist on all of you Hindu boys, if I had the power of insistence, learning the *Gita*. It is my belief that the impurity that we see about boys in schools, the carelessness about things that matter in life, the levity with which the student world deals with the greatest and most fundamental questions of life is due to this uprooting of tradition from which boys have hitherto derived their sustenance.

But I must not be misunderstood. I do not hold that everything ancient is good because it is ancient. I do not advocate surrender of God-given reasoning faculty in the face of ancient tradition. Any tradition however ancient, if inconsistent with morality, is fit to be banished from the land. Untouchability may be considered to be an ancient tradition, the institution of child widowhood and child marriage may be considered to be ancient tradition, and even so many an ancient horrible belief and superstitious practice. I would sweep them out of existence if I had the power. When, therefore, I talk of respecting the ancient tradition, you now understand what I mean, and it is because I see the same God in the *Bhagavadgita* as I see in the Bible and the *Koran* that I say to the Hindu boys that they will derive greater inspiration from the *Bhagavadgita* because they will be tuned to the *Gita* more than to any other book.

*Young India*, 22-9-1927

## “AN INDIGNANT PROTEST”

The Headmaster of a Bengali school writes :

“Your advice and utterances to students at Madras, asking them to marry widowed girls only, have horrified us, and I send forth my humble but indignant protest.

“This kind of advice will tend to destroy the tendency of the widows to observe lifelong *brahmacharya* which has given Indian womanhood the greatest or rather the highest place in the world and destroy their chances of attaining salvation through *brahmacharya* in a single birth, throwing them on the filthy path of worldly happiness. Thus this kind of keen sympathy for widows will do a great disservice to them and an injustice to the maidens whose marriage problem has become at present one of complexity and difficulty. Your theory of marriage will overturn the Hindu theory of transmigration, rebirth and even *mukti*, and will bring down Hindu society on the same level with other societies which we do not like. Our society has been demoralized no doubt, but we must have our eyes open to Hindu ideals and try to go up as far as we can and not be influenced by the examples of other societies and ideals. Examples of Ahalyabai, Rani Bhavani, Behula, Sita, Savitri, Damayanti will guide the Hindu society and we must direct it according to their ideals. I beg most humbly, therefore, that you will refrain from giving your opinions on these knotty questions and allow the society to do what it thinks best.”

This indignant protest leaves me unconverted and unrepentant. My advice will not wean from her purpose a single widow who has a will of her own and who knows *brahmacharya* and is bent upon observing it. But if the advice is followed, it will certainly bring great relief to those girls of tender age who knew not the meaning of marriage when they were put through the ceremony. The use of the term ‘widow’ in their connection is a violent abuse of a name with sacred associations. It is precisely for the very object that my correspondent has in view that I advise the youth of the country to marry these so-called widows or not at all. The sacredness of the institution can be preserved only when it is purged of the curse of child widowhood.

The statement that the widows attain *moksha* if they observe *brahmacharya* has no foundation whatsoever in experience. More things are necessary than mere *brahmacharya* for the attainment of the final bliss. And *brahmacharya* that

is superimposed carries no merit with it, and often gives rise to secret vice that saps the morals of the society in which that vice exists. Let the correspondent know that I am writing from personal observation.

I should be glad indeed if my advice results in elementary justice being done to the maiden widows, and if for that reason the other maidens instead of being prematurely sold to man's lust are given an opportunity of waiting for maturity in age and wisdom.

I have no theory of marriage that is inconsistent with a belief in transmigration, rebirth and *mukti*. The reader should know that millions of Hindus whom we arrogantly describe as belonging to the lower order have no ban on widow remarriage. And I do not see how if remarriage of old widowers does not interfere with that belief, real marriage of girls wrongly described as widows can interfere with that grand belief. I may mention for the edification of the correspondent that transmigration and rebirth are not mere theories with me but facts as patent as the daily rise of the sun. *Mukti* is a fact to realize which I am striving with all my might. And it is the contemplation of *mukti* which has given me a vivid consciousness of the wrong that is being done to these maiden widows. Let us not in our emasculation mention in the same breath as these modern injured maiden widows the immortal names of Sita and others referred to by the correspondent.

Lastly, whilst there is, and very properly, glorification of real widowhood in Hinduism, there is, so far as I am aware, no warrant for the belief that in the *Vedic* times there was any absolute ban upon remarriage of widows. But my crusade is not against real widowhood. It is against its atrocious caricature. The better way is not to regard as widows at all the girls I have in view and whom every Hindu who has a spark of chivalry in him is bound to relieve from their intolerable yoke. I therefore humbly but emphatically repeat the advice to every young Hindu to refuse to marry any but these maidens miscalled widows.

## LECTURE AT TIRUPPUR \*

“I cannot conceive anything so fortifying as a reverent study of the *Bhagavadgita*, and if students will remember that they are to learn it not in order to parade their Sanskrit knowledge, or even their knowledge of the *Gita*, they will know that they learn it in order to derive spiritual comfort and to solve the moral difficulties that face them. No man who engages in a reverent study of that book can help becoming a true servant of the nation and through it of humanity.” And by a strange, but fortunate coincidence this day also (as in Bangalore) happened to be a Sunday—the day on which we read the third chapter containing the gospel of service or of work. “The *Gita*,” said Gandhiji, blessing the students, “contains the gospel of Work, the gospel of *Bhakti* or Devotion, and the gospel of *Jnana* or Knowledge. Life should be a harmonious whole of these three. But the gospel of service is the basis of all, and what can be more necessary for those who want to serve the country than that they begin with the chapter enunciating the gospel of work? But you must approach it with the five necessary equipments, viz. *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (truth), *brahmacharya* (celibacy), *aparigraha* (non-possession), and *asteya* (non-stealing). Then and then only will you be able to reach a correct interpretation of it. And then you will read it to discover in it *ahimsa* and not *himsa*, as so many nowadays try to do. Read it with the necessary equipment and I assure you you will have peace of which you were never aware before.”

*Young India*, 3-11-1927

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\* From a speech, delivered before the students of the Tiruppur High School.

## PLEA FOR PERSONAL PURITY \*

It has been my good fortune to feel at home and make myself at home wherever I have gone in any part of the world; and had I not been able to do so, probably I should have died without having had to commit suicide long ago. But I feel doubly at home when I see my Parsi friends. You cannot understand this really. And you might also think that I am joking. It is not joking. It is serious, because of my having been in closest association with Parsis in South Africa and in India, and having had personally nothing but treasures of love from them. Even now you do not know, of course, but it gives me great pleasure to own before you that some of my best workers are Parsis, and they are those three grand-daughters of the Grand Old Man of India.

But I must not detain you on my personal and family affairs. I thank you very much for this purse and I like this opportunity of having come to you.

As I told the boys of the Trinity College a little while ago your education is absolutely worthless, if it is not built on a solid foundation of truth and purity. If you, boys, are not careful about the personal purity of your lives and if you are not careful about being pure in thought, speech, and deed, then I tell you that you are lost, although you may become perfect finished scholars.

I have been asked to draw your attention to one thing. Purity consists first of all in possessing a pure heart, but what there is in the heart really comes out also and is shown in outward acts and outward behaviour. And a boy who wants to keep his mouth pure will never utter a bad word. Of course, that is quite clear. But he neither will put anything into his mouth that will cloud his intellect, cloud his mind and damage his friends also.

I know that there are boys who smoke, and in Ceylon perhaps you are as bad as they are in Burma, though boys are becoming bad everywhere so far as this wretched habit of

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\* Speech delivered at the Dharmaraja College, Kandy, on 18-11-'27.

smoking is concerned. And of course, Parsis, as you know, are called, or rather miscalled, fire-worshippers. They are no more fire-worshippers than you though they see God through that great manifestation the Sun which is nothing but the God of Fire.

Some of you good Parsis never smoke, and you make it a point, whenever you have a number of boys in your care, to train the boys not to foul their mouths by smoke.

If any of you are smoking, you will henceforth give up that bad habit. Smoking fouls one's breath. It is a disgusting habit. When he is in a railway carriage, the smoker never cares whether there are ladies or men sitting about him who never smoke, and that the stench that comes out from his mouth may be disgusting to them.

The cigarette might be a small thing from a distance, but when the cigarette smoke goes into one's mouth and then comes out, it is poison. Smokers do not care where they spit. Here Gandhiji related a story from Tolstoy to explain how the tobacco habit was more disastrous in its effects than drink and proceeded :

Smoking clouds one's intellect, and it is a bad habit. If you ask doctors, and they happen to be good doctors, they will tell you that smoke has been the cause of cancer in many cases, or at least that smoke is at the bottom of it.

Why smoke, when there is no necessity for it? It is no food. There is no enjoyment in it except in the first instance through suggestion from outside.

You, boys, if you are good boys, if you are obedient to your teachers and parents, omit smoking, and whatever you save out of this, please send on to me for the famishing millions of India.

*Gandhiji in Ceylon, pp. 75-77.*

## ADVICE TO STUDENTS \*

It has indeed given me great pleasure to be able to visit this College.

You have reminded me of the happy days I spent in South Africa. Those were days when my life was almost wholly cast in the midst of my Mussulman countrymen and it was early in 1893 that I found myself in the company of some of the finest Mussulmans it has been my good fortune to meet, as also to influence. It therefore does not surprise me that you have invited me to meet you in this hall.

Maulana Shaukat Ali when he returned from Ceylon gave me what he said was a message from the Mussulmans of Ceylon to hasten to Ceylon as soon as possible. But the work in which both he and I were engaged made it impossible for me to come here at that time.

Those of you who are in the habit of reading Indian newspapers will know that just before I embarked for Colombo I had the pleasure of meeting the Professors and boys of the Jamia College at Delhi. I have not got the time to give you a set speech, because there are other appointments waiting for me, but I would summarize the speech I gave to the boys in Delhi.

All the education that you are receiving in this great college will be reduced to nothing if it is not built on the foundation of a pure character.

As I was reading your magazines I could not help admiring the zeal with which the work was done here and the marvellous progress that has been made in a few years. But as I was reading the report that was read before the Governor on the occasion of the foundation laying ceremony, I could not help feeling how nice it would be if we could raise a foundation of good character so that stones on stones might be raised thereon and we might look back with joy and pride upon that edifice.

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\* Speech delivered at the Zahira College, Colombo, on 22-11-'27.

But character cannot be built with mortar and stone. It cannot be built by hands other than your own. The Principal and the Professors cannot give you character from the pages of books. Character-building comes from their very lives and really speaking, it must come from within yourselves.

As I was studying Christianity, Hinduism and other great faiths of the world, I saw that there was a fundamental unity moving amidst the endless variety that we see in all religions, viz., Truth and Innocence. You must take the word 'Innocence' literally, that is, to mean non-killing and non-violence, and if you, boys, will take your stand defiantly always on Truth and Innocence, you will feel that you have built on solid foundation.

I am grateful for the generous purse you have presented to me. It is meant for finding work for the starving millions of India. These consist of Hindus, Mussulmans and Christians. Therefore you have, by giving me this donation, established a link between these starving millions and yourselves, and in doing so you have done a thing which is pleasing to God. It will be a very feeble link if you do not know the purpose for which this is going to be used. These moneys are utilized for finding work among men and women for the production of cloth like that you find on my person. But all this money will be useless if you cannot find the people to wear *khadi* so manufactured.

It is possible now for us to satisfy every taste and fashion. If you will forge a lasting and continuing link with the masses of India you will henceforth clothe yourselves in *khadi*.

*Gandhiji in Ceylon*, pp. 88-90.



## AT MAHINDA COLLEGE \*

It has given me the greatest pleasure to be able to be present at this very pleasant function. You have paid me indeed a very great compliment and conferred on me a great honour by allowing me to witness your proceedings and making the acquaintance of so many boys.

I hope that this institution will progressively expand, as, I have no doubt, it deserves. I have come to know enough of this beautiful island and its people to understand that there are Buddhists enough in this country, not merely to support one such institution, but many such institutions. I hope, therefore, that this institution will never have to pine for want of material support ; but having known something of the educational institutions both in South Africa and India, let me tell you that scholastic education is not merely brick and mortar. It is true boys and true girls who build such institutions from day to day. I know some huge architecturally perfect buildings going under the name of scholastic institutions, but they are nothing but whited sepulchres. Conversely, I know also some institutions which have to struggle from day to day for their material existence, but which because of this very want, are spiritually making advance from day to day. One of the greatest teachers that mankind has ever seen and one whom you have enthroned as the only Royal Monarch in your hearts delivered his living message not from a man-made building, but under the shadow of a magnificent tree. May I also venture to suggest that the aim of a great institution like this should be to impart such instruction and in such ways that it may be open to any boy or girl in Ceylon.

I notice already that, as in India, so in this country, you are making education daily more and more expensive so as to be beyond the reach of the poorest children. Let us all beware of making that serious blunder and incurring the deserved reproach of posterity. To that end let me put the greatest stress upon the desirability of giving these boys instruction from

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\* Speech delivered on the occasion of the Prize Distribution in Mahinda College at Galla, on 24-11-'27.

A to Z through the Sinhalese language. I am certain that the children of the nation that receive instruction in a tongue other than their own commit suicide. It robs them of their birth-right. A foreign medium means an undue strain upon the youngsters, it robs them of all originality. It stunts their growth and isolates them from their home. I regard therefore such a thing as a national tragedy of first importance, and I would like also to suggest that since I have known Sanskrit in India as the mother language, and since you have received all religious instruction from the teachings of one who was himself an Indian amongst Indians and who had derived his inspiration from Sanskrit writings that it would be but right on your part to introduce Sanskrit as one of the languages that should be diligently studied. I should expect an institution of this kind to supply the whole of the Buddhist community in Ceylon with text books written in Sinhalese and giving all the best from the treasures of old.

I hope that you will not consider that I have placed before you an unattainable ideal. Instances occur to me from history where teachers have made herculean efforts in order to restore the dignity of the mother-tongue and to restore the dignity of the old treasures which were about to be forgotten.

I am glad indeed that you are giving due attention to athletics and I congratulate you upon acquitting yourselves with distinction in games. I do not know whether you had any indigenous games or not. I should, however, be exceedingly surprised and even painfully surprised, if I were told that before cricket and football descended upon your sacred soil, your boys were devoid of all games. If you have national games, I would urge upon you that yours is an institution that should lead in reviving old games. I know that we have in India many noble indigenous games just as interesting and exciting as cricket or football, also as much attended with risks as football is, but with the added advantage that they are inexpensive, because the cost is practically next to nothing.

I am no indiscriminate superstitious worshipper of all that goes under the name of 'ancient'. I never hesitated to endeavour to demolish all that is evil or immoral, no matter how ancient it may be, but with that reservation. I must confess to

you that I am an adorer of ancient institutions and it hurts me to think that a people in their rush for everything modern despise all their ancient traditions and ignore them in their lives.

We of the East very often hastily consider that all that our ancestors laid down for us was nothing but a bundle of superstitions, but my own experience, extending now over a fairly long period of the inestimable treasures of the East has led me to the conclusion that, whilst there may be much that was superstitious, there is infinitely more which is not only not superstitious, but if we understand it correctly and reduce it to practice, gives life and ennobles one. Let us not therefore be blinded by the hypnotic dazzle of the West.

Again I wish to utter a word of caution against your believing that I am an indiscriminate despiser of everything that comes from the West. There are many things which I have myself assimilated from the West. There is a very great and effective Sanskrit word for that particular faculty which enables a man always to distinguish between what is desirable and what is undesirable, what is right and what is wrong, that word is known as *viveka*. Translated into English, the nearest approach is discrimination. I do hope that you will incorporate this word into Pali and Sinhalese.

There is one thing more which I would like to say in connection with your syllabus. I had hoped that I should see some mention made of handicrafts, and if you are not seriously teaching the boys under your care some handicrafts, I would urge you, if it is not too late, to introduce the necessary handicrafts known to this island. Surely, all the boys who go out from this institution will not expect or will not desire to be clerks or employees of the Government. If they would add to the national strength, they must learn with great skill all the indigenous crafts, and as cultural training and as the symbol of identification with the poorest among the poor, I know nothing so ennobling as hand spinning. Simple as it is, it is easily learnt. When you combine with hand spinning the idea that you are learning it not for your own individual self, but for the poorest among the nation, it becomes an ennobling sacrament. There must be added to this sacrament some occupation, some handicraft which a boy may consider will enable him to earn his living in afterlife.

You have rightly found place for religious instruction. I have experimented with quite a number of boys in order to understand how best to impart religious instruction and whilst I found that book instruction was somewhat of an aid, by itself it was useless. Religious instruction, I discovered, was imparted by teachers living the religion themselves. I have found that boys imbibe more from the teachers' own lives than they do from the books that they read to them, or the lectures that they deliver to them with their lips. I have discovered to my great joy that boys and girls have unconsciously a faculty of penetration whereby they read the thoughts of their teachers. Woe to the teacher who teaches one thing with his lips, and carries another in his breast.

Now, just one or two sentences to boys only and I have done.

As father of, you might say, many boys and girls, you might almost say of thousands of boys and girls, I want to tell you, boys, that after all you hold your destiny in your own hands. I do not care what you learn or what you do not learn in your school, if you will observe two conditions. One condition is that you must be fearlessly truthful against the heaviest odds under every circumstance imaginable. A truthful boy, a brave boy will never think of hurting even a fly. He will defend all the weak boys in his own school and help, whether inside or outside the school, all those who need his help. A boy who does not observe personal purity of mind and body and action is a boy who should be driven out of any school. A chivalrous boy would always keep his mind pure, his eyes straight and his hands unpolluted. You do not need to go to any school to learn these fundamental maxims of life, and if you will have this triple character with you, you will build on a solid foundation.

May then true *ahimsa* and purity be your shield for ever in your life. May God help you to realize all your noble ambition. I thank you once more for inviting me to take part in this function.

## JAFFNA STUDENTS' CONGRESS \*

I thank you for the beautiful address that you have presented to me this evening.

You have taken upon yourselves and very rightly, the credit of bringing me to this fair island, but you must remember also that those who take credit for anything have also to take discredit if any mishap occurs.

It is very difficult for me this evening to give you a message for the simple reason that I do not know your Congress sufficiently, nor do I know sufficiently the composition of my audience, but your worthy Chairman has informed me of the objects of your Congress. I shall try to give you some thoughts that occur to me on some of those objects.

If I understood him rightly, your first object is to revive ancient culture. You have then to understand what that ancient culture is and it must be necessarily culture which all students, whether they may be Hindus, Christians, Buddhists or of any other faith, would be interested in reviving, because I take it that by ancient culture you do not want to confine yourselves purely to Hindu students.

I take it that this Students' Congress includes all students, Hindus, Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists. Though today it has on its rolls no Muslim student or Buddhist student, it does not much matter for my argument, for the simple reason that your ultimate object is attainment of Swaraj, not merely for the Hindus and Christians of Jaffna, but for all the inhabitants of this island of which Jaffna is but a part. What I have said with reference to the inclusion of students belonging to these religions must hold good. That being so, we hark back to the question, what ancient culture it is we want to revive. It must, therefore, be such as to be common to all these elements and such as to be acceptable to all these elements. Therefore, whilst that culture will undoubtedly be predominantly Hindu culture, it can never be exclusively Hindu. The reason why I say that it must be predominantly Hindu is because you who are seeking

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\* Address delivered at the Jaffna Students' Congress on 26-11-'27.

to revive ancient culture, are predominantly Hindu, and are all the while thinking of that country which you rightly and proudly delight to call your motherland.

In Hindu culture I venture to submit Buddhistic culture is necessarily included for the simple reason that Buddha himself was an Indian, not only an Indian, but a Hindu amongst Hindus. I have never seen anything in the life of Gautama to warrant the belief that he renounced Hinduism and adopted a new faith. My task becomes easy when I consider also that Jesus himself was an Asiatic, and therefore it becomes a question really to consider what Asiatic or ancient Asiatic culture is. For that matter then, Mahomed was also an Asiatic.

Since you can only wish to revive all that is noble, and all that is permanent in ancient culture, your revival, necessarily must not be antagonistic to any of these faiths. The question then is to find out the common factor, the greatest common measure belonging to all these great faiths. And thus you will come according to my own estimate of things noble and great to this very simple factor, viz., that you want to be truthful and non-violent, for truth and non-violence are common to all these great faiths.

You cannot possibly wish to revive many of the customs that you and I might have even forgotten, that may have at one time formed part of Hinduism.

I recall one great thought that the late Justice Ranade expressed when he was speaking of the revival of ancient culture and he told his audience that it would be difficult for any single person in the audience to say exactly what ancient culture was and when that culture ceased to be ancient and began to be modern. He also said that a prudent man would not swear by anything, because it was ancient, but he told the audience that any culture, ancient or modern, must be submitted to the test of reason and experience.

I am obliged to utter this warning to this Congress of students who are to be the makers of the destinies of this land, because of so many reactionary forces gathering round us not only here, but throughout the world. I see from my own experience in India that many who are professing to revive ancient culture do not hesitate under the name of that revival to revive old superstitions and prejudices.

Ancient tradition and ancient lore have been dragged almost out of the tomb to justify the hideous doctrine of untouchability. A similar attempt, some of you know, is now being made to justify the institution of *Devadasis*.

You will not therefore consider that I have given you a laboured statement in warning you against being misled into wrong doing under the name of revival of ancient culture. Perhaps you will understand the significance of this warning coming as it does from a man who is himself not only a lover of ancient culture but has been endeavouring to reproduce in his own life, to the best of his ability, all that is noble, that is permanent in ancient culture.

In trying to explore the hidden treasures of ancient culture, I have come upon this inestimable boon that all that is permanent in ancient Hindu culture is also to be found in the teachings of Jesus, Buddha, Mahomed and Zoroaster. So I have come to this workable arrangement for myself. If I find anything in Hinduism which is ancient but repugnant to my Christian brother or my Mussulman brother, I immediately begin to fidget and doubt the ancientness of that claim. So I came by a process of examination to this irresistible conclusion that there was nothing so very ancient in this world as these two good old things — truth and non-violence. And working along these lines of truth and non-violence, I also discovered that I must not attempt to revive ancient practices if they were inconsistent with, call it if you will, modern life as it must be lived. Ancient practices may have been perfectly good and perhaps absolutely necessary at the time when those practices were adopted, but they might be entirely out of date with modern needs and still not be contrary to truth or non-violence.

Then you can see how safe the road becomes in front of you and me when we summarily and mercilessly reject untouchability, *Devadasi* institution, drunkenness, sacrifice of animals in the very name of God whom we call Compassionate, All-merciful, Forgiving. We can unhesitatingly and summarily reject all those things, because they do not appeal to our moral sense. So much with reference to the negative side of it ; but there is a positive side to it which is just as important as the negative.

In putting before you the positive side let me draw for you one very necessary corollary to the doctrine of non-violence. I

put it before my very dear friends, the reformers, a very small body of staunch workers in Chettinad. The corollary or the deduction is this : that if we are to be non-violent we must then not wish for anything on this earth which the meanest or the lowest of human beings cannot have. If that is a sound proposition—and I claim that it is a direct corollary from the doctrine of non-violence,—then if you accept it, then it follows that we may not barter away our ancient simplicity for anything on this earth. Now, you will perhaps understand my determined opposition to the modern rush, the hypnotic dazzle that seems almost to overcome us and overtake us ; and that is coming to us with such violent force from the West.

I have taken great pains in my writings as also in my speeches to distinguish between the modern methods adopted in the West, the multiplicity of wants and material comforts, and the essential teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. So, in the opening sentences of my speech I threw out the hint of what was to come when I told you that after all Jesus was an Asiatic, Mahomed was an Asiatic ; but drawing that sharp distinction between the teachings and message of Jesus and what is today going on in America, in England and other parts of the West, I have been able to live at peace with thousands upon thousands of my Christian friends in South Africa and now, because the circle is growing ever larger, throughout the world.

So you Hindus and Buddhists here — if there is even a handful of Buddhists — if you will be true to your ancient culture, you will refuse to have anything whatsoever to do with this hypnotic dazzle, even though it may come to you in the so-called Christian garb.

If you have an immovable faith in yourselves, if you will also cultivate inexhaustible patience, you will find that the Christian friends, even though they may come to you with the Western dazzle behind them, will shed all that dazzle and be converted to the doctrine of simplicity which alone can satisfy the test of the corollary that I have ventured to draw before this audience.

If you have closely followed my reasoning, you will at once understand the message, the imperishable message of the spinning wheel. It is because I see in the spinning wheel the hand of



God working, it is because I see in the spinning wheel the satisfaction of the needs of the meanest of human beings, that in season and out of season, I think about it, work at it, pray about it and speak about it. If there is any other thing which can bring you nearer to the famishing people of the earth, — let alone India for the time being, — that can put you at once on a level with the scavenger, I will withdraw the spinning wheel and hug that other thing in a moment. Now you will perhaps also understand why I go about from door to door shamelessly and ceaselessly with the begging bowl and beg of every one to put something into it if they will do so with a willing heart.

I have now overstayed my time, I must not exhaust your patience and I must now therefore leave you to “dot the i’s and cross the t’s” of the speech that I have given you. I have to talk to the student world about several other things, because I have the honour of enjoying their confidence, but tonight I must not go any further with my remarks.

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all that you have done and are doing and if you will act in accordance with the paper that some of you sent to me, when I was in Colombo, you will certainly have done a great thing.

*Gandhiji in Ceylon, pp 128-34*

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### OBJECT LESSON IN CHARITY \*

If you had been looking forward to meeting me under this roof, I can say that I was no less looking forward to meeting you. Though I receive, and receive with thankfulness, money from millionaires, it is a source of much greater pleasure to me to receive small gifts, no matter how small they may be, from boys and girls who are still making their lives. It gives me greater pleasure for two reasons. One is, the gift, which springs from innocent boys and girls, fructifies much more than gifts of those who may be considered worldly-wise men. The second reason is that gifts such as yours give me a keener sense of responsibility than perhaps I should otherwise have.

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\* Speech at St. John's College, Jaffna, 29-11-'27.

You know that each rupee that is to be found in this purse will go to find work for sixteen semi-starving women in the remote villages of India, and give them one anna per day for the work that they may do. Remember that they and their children do not get anything like two full meals per day and that is what I can tell you from my own experience of hundreds of Indian villages. Your gift, therefore, is really an object lesson in true charity. What can be better or nobler than that from your youth whilst you are shouldering no responsibility, you become accustomed to thinking not merely of yourselves, but of those who are much poorer and much unfortunately placed than you are.

It is undoubtedly a great thing that in your school there are no distinctions and no one is considered to be an untouchable. What you have done in giving me this generous purse is really following along the lines that you are going, for, these children and these women on whose behalf you have given this purse are more unfortunately placed than even the so-called untouchables. I have not the power to make any return for your kindness and your generosity. I can only pray to God that He may bless you for all the good things that you may do in life ; for, I know, that mere mental training is nothing, if it is not accompanied by a true training of the heart, and may your hearts extend in the manner that your minds may.

I thank you once more.

*Gandhiji in Ceylon*, pp. 141-42

## THE PLACE OF JESUS \*

I am deeply grateful to you for the generous purse that you have given me on behalf of the semi-starving millions of India.

You, Sir, sent me due notice yesterday of the very important question that you have repeated this morning, viz., the place of Christ among the great teachers of the world. I have many engagements between now and 10-30 ; therefore, and also for other reasons into which I do not want to enter, I would fain have avoided this question. But on the principle that has guided my life that I must take things as they come to me, unless I find it utterly impossible for me to cope with them, I propose to devote the very few minutes that I have at my disposal to answering that question.

I say in one sentence that for many many years I have regarded Jesus of Nazareth as one amongst the mighty teachers that the world has had, and I say this in all humility. I claim humility for this expression for the simple reason that this is exactly what I feel. Of course, Christians claim a higher place for Jesus of Nazareth than as a non-Christian and as a Hindu I have been able to feel. I purposely use the word 'feel' instead of 'give', because I consider that neither I, nor anybody else can possibly arrogate to himself the claim of giving place to a great man. The great teachers of mankind have had their places not given to them, but the places have belonged to them as a matter of right, as a matter of service that they have rendered ; but it is given to the lowest and humblest amongst us to feel certain things about certain people. The relation between great teachers and ourselves is somewhat after the style of relation between a husband and a wife. It would be a most terrible thing, a tragic thing, if I was to argue out intellectually for myself what place I was to give to my wife in my heart. It is not in my giving, but she takes the place that belongs to her as a matter of right in my heart. It is

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\* Speech at Jaffna Central College, 29-11-'27.

a matter purely for feeling. Then I can say that Jesus occupies in my heart the place of one of the great teachers who have made a considerable influence on my life. Leave the Christians alone for the present. I shall say to the 75 per cent Hindus receiving instruction in this college that your lives will be incomplete unless you reverently study the teachings of Jesus. I have come to the conclusion, in my own experience, that those who, no matter to what faith they belong, reverently study the teachings of other faiths, broaden, instead of narrowing, their own hearts. Personally, I do not regard any of the great religions of the world as false. All have served in enriching mankind and are even now serving their purpose. A liberal education to all should include, as I have put it, a reverent study of other faiths; but I do not want to labour this point, nor have I the time to do so.

There is one thing which, as I am speaking to you, occurs to me, which came to me in my early studies of the Bible. It seized me immediately I read the passage "Make this World the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and everything will be added unto." I tell you that if you will understand, appreciate, and act up to the spirit of this passage, you won't even need to know what place Jesus or any other teacher occupied in your heart. If you will do the proper scavenger's work, clean and purify your hearts and get them ready, you will find that all these mighty teachers will take their places without invitation from us. That, to my mind, is the basis of all sound education. Culture of the mind must be subservient to the culture of the heart. May God help you to become pure!

## AT THE UDIVIL GIRLS' COLLEGE \*

It has given me very great pleasure indeed to meet you this morning.

I do not at all appreciate the idea of your little gifts which have come right from the bottom of your hearts having been merged in the general purse; but I am going to put the best construction possible upon the fact of your purse having been merged in the general purse, you being more modest than boys, do not want me to know that you had given anything at all; but having met thousands or tens of thousands of girls throughout India, it is difficult for girls nowadays to hide from me any good things that they may do.

Now, there are some girls who do not mind even telling me the bad things that they do. Let me hope that of all these girls before me, there is not one single girl who does a bad thing. Not having the time to cross-examine you, I am not going to weary you with questions; but if there are any girls in our midst who do bad things I would fain let them know that if that is the case their education is useless.

Your parents do not send you to school to become dolls. On the contrary you are expected to become Sisters of Mercy. Do not make the mistake of thinking that only those may be called Sisters of Mercy who wear a particular dress. She becomes a Sister of Mercy immediately she thinks less of herself, and more of those who are poorer and more unfortunate than herself; and you have done the work of Sisters of Mercy in giving your mite to the purse that has been presented to me, because that purse has been presented for those who are unfortunately poorer than yourselves.

To give a little bit of money is easy enough; to do a little thing oneself is more difficult. If you really feel for the people for whom you are giving money, you must go a step further and wear *khadi* that these people manufacture. If, when *khadi* is brought before you, you say "*Khadi* is a bit coarse, we cannot wear it," then I know you have not the spirit of self-sacrifice in you.

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\* Speech delivered on 29-11-'27.

It is such a very nice thing that here there is no distinction between high class and low class, touchables and untouchables ; and if your hearts are also working in that direction, and you do not consider yourselves superior to some other girls, it is a very good thing indeed.

May God bless you !

*Gandhiji in Ceylon*, pp. 144-46

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## AT THE RAMANATHAN GIRLS' COLLEGE \*

It has indeed given me great joy to be able to come here this morning as if to put a finishing touch to the whole round of visits to different scholastic institutions in Jaffna.

The exquisite taste and simplicity with which, the whole of this ceremony has been arranged this morning, I assure you, has not escaped my observation. I appreciate also the generous purse of Rs. 1,111 which, too, unlike most purses, is given in a *khadi* bag. To crown all, Lady Ramanathan has placed in my hands a kind telegram from Sir P. Ramanathan who himself is unable to attend this function.

I should have always regretted it if I had not been able to visit this institution, the monument of Sir Ramanathan's generosity and thoughtfulness. Lady Ramanathan has very considerately furnished me with an advance copy of your address together with the report of this institution and two copies of your magazine.

Your promise in your address that you are going to observe this day as an annual function and devote it to collections for *khadi* work has touched me to the core. I know that this is no idle promise on your part, but that you are going to fulfil that promise religiously. If the famishing millions, on whose behalf I am touring, could possibly understand this determination on the part of their sisters, I know, it would gladden their hearts, but you will be pained to be informed by me that these dumb millions in whose behalf you have given me this purse — and so many purses have been given in Ceylon — would not even

\* Speech delivered on 29-11-'27.

understand such things, if I attempted to tell them. No description that I can give you of their miserable life can possibly give you a proper perspective of what that position means.

This immediately brings me to the question — what are you to do for these and such other people? It is easy enough to suggest a little more simplicity, a little more hardness in life, but that would be merely playing with the question. Thoughts and thoughts like these brought me to the spinning wheel. I said to myself, as I say to you now, that if you could but establish a living link between those famishing millions and yourselves, there is some hope for you, for them, and for the world.

Religious instruction you have, and very properly in this institution. You have got also a beautiful temple. I see from your time-table that you begin the day by offering worship, all of which is good and elevating; but it may easily amount to a beautiful ceremonial and nothing else, if that worship is not translated day after day into some practical work. So I say, in order to follow out that act of worship, take up the spinning wheel, sit at it for half an hour and think of these millions that I have described to you and say in the name of God, "I spin for the sake of them." If you do it with your heart, with the knowledge that you are the humbler and the richer for that real act of devotion, if you will dress not for show, but for covering your limbs, you will certainly not have any hesitation in wearing *khadi* and establish that bond between yourselves and the millions.

This is not all that I want to say to the girls of this institution.

If you will be deserving of the care and attention that Sir Ramanathan has bestowed upon you and that is being bestowed on you by Lady Ramanathan and the staff working under her care, you will have to do many more things. I saw in your magazines mention made with some degree of pardonable pride of what some of the old school girls had been doing. I saw notices after this style. So and so married so and so — 4 or 5 notices. There is, I know, nothing wrong in a girl who has come of age, about 25 or even 22 years old, in getting married. But I miss in these notices a single mention of a girl who had dedicated herself to service only. So, I propose to tel

you what I told the girls of H. H. the Maharaja's College for girls in Bangalore, that we get a poor return for the great efforts that are being made by educationists and by lavish charities, if you all become mere dolls and disappear from life, as soon as you are discharged from such institutions.

A vast majority of girls disappear from public life as soon as they are discharged from schools and colleges. You of this institution have no such business. You have the example of Miss Emery and the examples of others who have been superintending, and who have been, if I am not speaking incorrectly, maidens.

Every girl, every Indian girl, is not born to marry. I can show many girls who are today dedicating themselves to service instead of serving one man. It is high time that Hindu girls produce or reproduce an edition, and if possible a glorified edition, of Parvati and Sita.

You claim to be Shaivites. You know what Parvati did. She did not spend money for a husband, nor would she allow herself to be bought, and she today adorns the Hindu firmament by being classed with one of the Seven *Satis* — not because of the degrees in an educational institution that she received, but because of her unheard of *tapasya* (penance).

Here, I understand that there is the hateful system of dowry, whereby it becomes most difficult for young women to get suitable matches. The grown up girls — some of you are grown up — are expected to resist all such temptations. If you will resist these evil customs, you will, some of you, have to begin by remaining maidens either for life, or at least for a number of years. Then, when it is time for you to marry, and you feel that you must have a partner in life, you will not be in thirst of one who has money, or fame, or beauty of person, but you will be in search of one — even as Parvati was — who has got all the matchless qualities which go to make good character. You know how Naradjee described Shiva to Parvati — a mere pauper smeared with ashes, no handsomeness about him and a *brahmachari*; and Parvati said, 'Yes, he will be my husband.' You won't have several editions of Shiva unless some of you will be content to offer *tapasya* not for thousands of years, as Parvati did. We, frail human beings, cannot afford to do it, but you can do so at least during your lifetime.



If you will accept these conditions, you will refuse to disappear into the kingdom of dolls, but will aspire to be *satis* like Parvati, Damayanti, Sita and Savitri. Then and not till then, in my humble opinion, will you have deserved an institution of this character.

May God fire you with this ambition, and if you are inspired, may He help you to realize this ambition.

*Gandhiji in Ceylon*, pp. 146-49.

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## AT THE JAFFNA COLLEGE

It has given me the greatest pleasure to visit so many educational institutions here. Amongst them not the least is this the oldest educational institution in this peninsula. Moreover, I am given to understand that many old boys of this institution are today distinguished servants of the country. Lastly, I had the pleasure of meeting your Vice-Principal in Bangalore and the two Secretaries of the Reception Committee are also old boys of this school.

It always gladdens me to see the smiling faces of boys and girls. I know also that the work that I have the privilege of doing is today being done by so many grown up boys who have given their all to the service of the motherland. Your purse, therefore, is very precious to me. I know that all the moneys — and by no means a small sum that I have received from boys and girls — will bear greater fruit than the moneys received from old and wise men. Your money comes with the stamp of innocence upon it, and it goes also to millions or some of the millions of men and women who are innocent, not deliberately perhaps, but because they cannot be otherwise.

I should like you to take a further step and consolidate the bond that you have established between these starving millions and yourselves by adopting the *khadi* that will be manufactured out of these moneys. It will be a perpetual object lesson for you in charity to be able to think first thing each day when you put on your *khadi* that you are wearing it for the sake of the millions of paupers in India.

I have no doubt that your teachers repeatedly tell you that all this mental and literary training that you receive will be of no avail to you unless it is broad-based on truth and love. Truth will make you brave and fearless men, able to give a good account of yourselves, wherever you go. Love will make life bearable for you, because love has a special quality of attracting abundance of love in return.

May God help you day after day to develop these qualities within yourselves.

*Gandhiji in Ceylon, pp. 149-50*

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## ON THEIR TRIAL

What happened to the students during the Rowlatt Act agitation is repeating itself now. During those precious days one of them wrote to me that he felt like committing suicide because he was rusticated. A student now writes :

"The students of.....of.....heard the Mother's call and responded to it. We observed *hartal* on the 3rd. For this courageous deed of ours, we are being fined Rs. 2/- per head. The poor students are losing their freeships, half-freeships and scholarships. Please write to Mr.....the Principal or\*advise him through *Young India*. Tell him we are no criminals, we have committed no crime. Tell him we listened and responded to the Mother's call, we saved her to our utmost, from dishonour. Tell him we are no cowards. Please come forward to our aid."

I cannot follow the advice to write to the Principal. If he is not to lose his 'job', I suppose he has to take some disciplinary measures. So long as educational institutions remain under the patronage of the Government, they will be, as they must be, used for the support of the Government, and the students or the teachers who support anti-Government popular measures, must count the cost and take the risk of being dismissed. From the patriot's standpoint, the students did well and bravely in making common cause with the people. They would have laid themselves open to the charge of want of patriotism, if not worse, if they had not responded to the country's call. From the Government standpoint, they undoubtedly did wrong

and incurred their severe displeasure. The students cannot blow hot and cold. If they will be with the people's cause, they must hold their scholastic career subservient to the cause and sacrifice it when it comes in conflict with the interests of the country. I saw this quite clearly in 1920 and subsequent experience has confirmed the first impression. There is no doubt that the safest and the most honourable course for the student world is to leave Government schools and colleges at any cost. But the next best course for them is to hold themselves in readiness to be thrown out whenever a conflict occurs between the Government and the people. If they will not be, as they have been elsewhere, leaders themselves in the revolt against the Government, they must at least become staunch and true followers. Let their facing of the consequences be as brave as was their response to the nation's call. Let them not humiliate themselves, let them not surrender their self-respect in trying to re-enter colleges and schools from which they may have been dismissed. The bravery of their response will be counted as bravado, if it succumbs on the very first trial.

I hear that during the days preceding the *hartal* the students discarded foreign cloth and very largely patronized *khadi*. Let it not be said of them that this was but a passing show and that they have on pressure from without or temptation from within discarded *khadi* as quickly as they discarded foreign cloth. To me foreign cloth for this country means foreign Government. I wish this was accepted as a self-evident proposition.

*Young India*, 16-2-1928

## STUDENTS' NOBLE SATYAGRAHA

In referring to the universality of Satyagraha, I have time and again observed in these columns that it is capable of application in the social no less than in the political field. It may equally be employed against Government, society, or one's own family, father, mother, husband or wife, as the case may be. For, it is the beauty of this spiritual weapon that when it is completely free from the taint of *himsa* and its use is actuated purely and solely by love it may be used with absolute impunity in any connection and in any circumstances whatever. A concrete instance of its use against evil was furnished by the brave and spirited students of Dharmaj (in Kheda District) a few days back. The facts as gleaned from the various communications about the incident received by me were as follows :

A gentleman of Dharmaj, some days back, gave a caste dinner in connection with the twelfth day ceremony of the death of his mother. It was preceded by a keen controversy about the subject among the young men of the place who shared with a number of other local inhabitants their strong dislike of this custom. They felt that on this occasion something must be done. Accordingly, most of them took all or some of the following three vows :

1. Not to join their elders at the dinner or otherwise partake of the food served on that occasion.
2. To observe fast on the day of the dinner as an emphatic protest against this practice.
3. To bear patiently and cheerfully any harsh treatment that might be accorded to them by their elders for taking this step.

In pursuance of this decision quite a large number of students, including some children of tender age, fasted on the day on which the dinner was given and took upon themselves the wrath of their so-called elders. Nor was the step free from the dangers of serious pecuniary consequences to the students. The 'elders' threatened to stop the allowances of their boys and even to withdraw any financial aid that they were giving to local institutions, but the boys stood firm. As many as two hundred and eighty-five students thus refused to take part in the caste dinner, and most of them fasted.

I tender my congratulations to these boys and hope that everywhere students will take a prominent part in effecting social reform. They hold in their pocket, as it were, the key to social reform and the protection of their religion, just as they have in their possession the key to Swaraj — though they may not be aware of it owing to their negligence or carelessness. But I hope that the example set by the students of Dharmaj will awaken them to a sense of their power. In my opinion the true *shraddha* of the deceased lady was performed by these young men fasting on that day, while those who gave the dinner wasted good money and set a bad example to the poor. The rich, moneyed class ought to use their God-given wealth for philanthropic purposes. They should understand that the poor cannot afford to give caste dinners on wedding or on funeral ceremonies. These bad practices have proved to be the ruin of many a poor man. If the money that was spent in Dharmaj on the caste dinner had been used for helping poor students, or poor widows, or for *khadi* or cow protection, or the amelioration of the 'untouchables', it would have borne fruit and brought peace to the departed soul. But as it is, the dinner has already been forgotten, it has profited nobody and it has caused pain to the students and the sensible section of the Dharmaj public.

Let no one imagine that the Satyagraha has gone in vain, because it did not succeed in preventing the dinner in question from taking place. The students themselves knew that there was little possibility of their Satyagraha producing any immediate tangible result. But we may safely take it that if they do not let their vigilance go to sleep, no *shethia* will again dare to give post-mortem dinner. A chronic and long-standing social evil cannot be swept away at a stroke, it always requires patience and perseverance.

When will the 'elders' of our society learn to recognize the signs of the time? How long will they be slaves to custom instead of using it as a means for the amelioration of society and the country? How long will they keep their children divorced from a practical application of the knowledge which they are helping them to acquire? When will they rescue their sense of right and wrong from its present state of trance and wake up and be *mahajans* in the true sense of the word?

## BOYCOTT AND STUDENTS

The principal of a college writes :

"The promoters of the boycott movement are dragging the students into their movement. It is obvious that no one will attach the slightest value to the part the students play in this political propaganda. When the students leave their schools and colleges and join any demonstration, they mingle with the rowdies of the place and have to be responsible for all the outrages of the *badmashas* and often receive the first blows from the policeman's baton. They, besides, incur the displeasure of the school and college authorities whose punishment they have to submit to; they further disobey their guardians who might refuse to finance them further, which spells their ruin. I can understand youth movements which aim at doing such constructive work as teaching the ignorant peasants, spreading knowledge of sanitation etc., during holidays; but to see them turn against their own parents and teachers and walk along streets in questionable company and help the breaking of law and order is a sorry spectacle. May I request you to advise the politicians not to draw the students from their legitimate work to make their demonstration *more effective*? In fact, they are detracting from the value of their demonstration by so doing, as it is likely to be easily put down as the work of inconsiderate boys led astray by selfish and foolish agitators.

"I am not against their learning modern politics. It will be a good thing if the teachers would collect and bring to their notice newspaper utterances for and against any pending question of the day and teach the students to draw their own conclusions. I have tried the scheme with success. In fact no subject is taboo to the students, as Bertrand Russell and others advocate students should be taught even sex questions. What am I dead against is the students being used as tools for purposes which serve not themselves or those who so use them."

The correspondent has written in the hope of my condemning the participation by the student world in active political work. But I am sorry to have to disappoint him. He should have known that in 1920-21 I had not an inconsiderable share in drawing students out of their schools and colleges and inducing them to undertake political duty carrying with it the risk of imprisonment. I think it is their clear duty to take a leading part in the political movement of their country. They are doing so all the world over. In India where political consciousness has still recently been unfortunately confined in a large measure to the English educated class, their duty is, indeed, greater. In

China and Egypt, it was the students who have made the national movement possible. They cannot do less in India.

What the principal might have urged was the necessity of students observing the rules of non-violence and acquiring control over the rowdies, instead of being controlled by them.

*Young India*, 29-3-1928

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### NATIONAL v. ALIEN EDUCATION \*

I trust you have given careful thought during your vacation to the fundamentals recently adopted by the (Gujarat) Vidyapith. As I have repeatedly said our strength does not lie in numbers. Not that we ignore them, but the fewness need cause no worry to us. Our real strength lies in a correct understanding, acceptance and practice, so far as it is humanly possible, of these fundamentals. If the students who have remained loyal to the Vidyapith live up to its creed, we are sure to achieve through them the goal that we have set before us, namely, Swaraj. What is needed is sincerity of purpose and fearless pursuit of the principles. I want you to put your teachers at ease and to assure them that you will be loyal at all hazard to the principles for which the Vidyapith stands. Truth and *ahimsa* constitute the keystone of our arch, and those who have no faith in these have no place here.

Let us understand some of the obvious distinctions between Government institutions and the national. One of our students has gone to jail in Bardoli and many more will go. They are the pride of the Vidyapith. Much as they may desire to do likewise, can students of Government institutions dare to do so? It is not open to them to go to Bardoli and help Vallabhbhai, as it is to you. They can only give secret sympathy. What is literary training worth if it cramp and confine us at a critical moment in national life? Knowledge and literary training are no recompense for emasculation.

Again there is a world of difference between our method of teaching and theirs. For instance, we may not teach English

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\* From the inaugural address to the students of the Gujarat Mahavidyalaya and the Vinayamandir, Ahmedabad, on 11-6-'28.

in the way they do. We may give the working knowledge of that language, but we may not without committing national suicide neglect the mother tongue, and make English the vehicle of our thought. In this national institution we strive to correct the pernicious practice. We must learn all our subjects through the Gujarati language. We must enrich it and make it capable of expressing all shades of thought and feeling. In no other country do we find the state of things we do here. We have paid dearly for having all these years learnt everything through the medium of the English language. We have strayed from the path of duty.

Then take the teaching of economics. The present system obtaining in Government institutions is vicious. Each country has its own economics. German text-books are different from the English. Free trade may be England's salvation. It spells our ruin. We have yet to formulate a system of Indian economics.

The same about history. A Frenchman writing a history of India will write it in his own way. The Englishman will write it quite differently. The descriptions of battles between the English and the French will differ with the writers who have described them. Indian history written from original sources by an Indian patriot will be different from that written by an English bureaucrat though each may be quite honest. We have grievously erred in accepting English estimates of events in our national life. Here, therefore, there is a vast field for you and your teachers for original research.

Even our teaching of a subject like arithmetic will also be different. Our teacher of arithmetic frames his examples from Indian conditions. He will thus simultaneously with the teaching of arithmetic teach Indian geography.

Then we are putting a special emphasis on manual and industrial training. Do not make the mistake of imagining that this training will dull your wit. It is not by making our brains a storehouse for cramming facts that our understanding is opened. An intelligent approach to an industrial training is often a more valuable aid to the intellect than an indifferent reading of literature.



## A SHAME UPON YOUNG MEN

A correspondent sends me a newspaper cutting showing that recently in Hyderabad, Sindh, the demand for bridegrooms has been increasing at an alarming rate, an employee of the Imperial Telegraph Engineering Service having exacted Rs. 20,000 as cash dowry during betrothal, and promises of heavy payments on the wedding day and on special occasions thereafter. Any young man who makes dowry a condition of marriage discredits his education and his country and dishonours womanhood. There are many youth movements in the country. I wish that these movements would deal with questions of this character. Such associations often become self-adulation societies, instead of becoming, as they should be, bodies representing solid reform from within. Good as the work of these bodies is at times in helping public movements, it should be remembered that the youth of the country have their reward in the public appreciation they get. Such work, if it is not backed by internal reform, is likely to demoralize the youth by creating in them a sense of unwarranted self-satisfaction. A strong public opinion should be created in condemnation of the degrading practice of dowry and young men who soil their fingers with such ill-gotten gold should be excommunicated from society. Parents of girls should cease to be dazzled by English degrees and should not hesitate to travel outside their little castes and provinces to secure true, gallant young men for their daughters.

*Young India*, 21-6-1928

## AWAKENING AMONG STUDENTS

The message of Bardoli has not yet been fully delivered. But incomplete as it still is, it has taught us lessons which we shall not easily forget. It has revived our drooping spirits, it has brought us new hope, it has shown the immense possibilities of mass non-violence practised not from conviction, but like most virtues with most of us as a policy. The descriptions I have heard from eye-witnesses of the wonderful demonstration held in Bombay in honour of Shri Vallabhbhai Patel, the spontaneous offering of Rs. 25,000, the affectionate besieging of his car, the showering of gold and bank notes on him as he was passing through the huge crowds, the ovation that signalized his entry into the theatre are proof of what Bardoli has wrought in the space of a few months by its courage and sufferings. Marked as the awakening has been throughout India, it has been more marked amongst the students and the most among the Bombay students. I tender my congratulations to Shri Nariman and the brave lads and lasses on whom he has acquired such a wonderful hold. And among the students the eye-witnesses single out the three Parsi girls, Miss Davar and Misses Bhesania, who by their boundless enthusiasm and courage are said to have electrified the student world in Bombay. Mahadev Desai has a letter from a student in a Poona College whose students on the 4th instant spontaneously observed the Students' Bardoli Day, stopped all work and made collections to which there was a willing response. May this manifestation of courage on the part of the students of Government colleges and schools never die out nor fail at the crucial moment. The letters being received from students of self-denial practised by them for the sake of paying their humble mite to the Bardoli funds are most touching. The students of the Gurukul Kangdi, Vaishya Vidyalaya, Sasawane, a hostel in Ghatkopar, Supa Gurukul near Navsari and several other institutions which I cannot recall at the time of writing have been either doing labour to earn a few rupees or denying themselves milk and ghee for a month or less.

It would have been monstrous if the lesson that the rustics of Bardoli, especially the illiterate women whom we have hitherto refused to count amongst the fighters for freedom, have been teaching us by their silent suffering and cool courage, had been wholly lost upon us. It can be said without fear of contradiction that it was the students of China who led the fight for freedom in that great country, it is the students in Egypt who are in the forefront in Egypt's struggle for real independence. Students of India are expected to do no less. They attend schools and colleges or should attend not for self but for service. They should be the salt of the nation.

The greatest obstacle in the way of the students is fear of consequences mostly imaginary. The first lesson, therefore, that students have to learn is to shed fear. Freedom can never be won by those who are afraid of rustication, poverty and even death. The greatest fear for students of Government institutions is rustication. Let them realize that learning without courage is like a waxen statue, beautiful to look at but bound to melt at the least touch of a hot substance.

*Young India*, 12-7-1928

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### SELF-SUPPORT IS SELF-RESPECT

The suggestion has often been made in these columns that in order to make education compulsory, or even available to every boy or girl wishing to receive education, our schools and colleges should become almost, if not wholly, self-supporting, not through donations or State aid or fees exacted from students, but through remunerative work done by the students themselves. This can only be done by making industrial training compulsory. Apart from the necessity which is daily being more and more recognized of students having an industrial training side by side with literary training, there is in this country the additional necessity of pursuing industrial training in order to make education directly self-supporting. This can only be done when our students begin to recognize the dignity of labour and when the convention is established of regarding ignorance of manual occupation a mark of disgrace. In America,

which is the richest country in the world and where therefore perhaps there is the least need for making education self-supporting, it is the most usual thing for students to pay their way wholly or partially. Thus says the *Hindustanee Student*, the official bulletin of the Hindustan Association of America, 500 Riverside Drive, New York City :

"Approximately 50 per cent of the American students use the summer vacation and part of their time during the academic year to earn money. 'Self-supporting students are respected,' writes the bulletin of the California University. With reasonable diligence a student can devote from 12 to 25 hours per week (during the academic year) to outside work without seriously interfering with college work of 12 to 16 units (credits) involving 36 to 48 hours a week.....A student should have some sort of practical knowledge of the following: carpentry, surveying, drafting, bricklaying, plastering, auto-driving, photography, machine-shop work, dyeing, field work, general farm work, instrumental music and so on. Such common work as waiting on table for two hours, etc., is available during the academic year, which relieves a student from expenses for board. A partially self-supporting student by working during the summer vacation may save up from 150 to 200 dollars. Kansas, N. Y. University, Pittsburg, Union University, Antioch College offer 'cooperative' courses in Industrial Engineering by which a student can earn one year's tuition fees working in industrial plants for which he also receives credit for his practical experience.

"The University of Michigan has under consideration the opening of similar cooperative courses in Civil and Electrical Engineering. One year more is required to graduate in engineering by pursuing co-operative courses."

If America has to model her schools and colleges so as to enable students to earn their scholastic expenses, how much more necessary it must be for our schools and colleges? Is it not far better that we find work for poor students than that we pauperize them by providing free studentships? It is impossible to exaggerate the harm we do to Indian youth by filling their minds with the false notion that it is ungentlemanly to labour with one's hands and feet for one's livelihood or schooling. The harm done is both moral and material, indeed much more moral than material. A free scholarship lies and should lie like a load upon a conscientious lad's mind throughout his whole life. No one likes to be reminded in after life that he had to depend upon charity for his education. Contrarily where is the person who will not recall with pride those days if he had the good fortune to have had them when he worked

in a carpentry-shop or the like for the sake of educating himself — mind, body and soul ?

*Young India*, 2-8-1928

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## AHIMSA IN EDUCATION \*

One of the questions put to me was as follows :

“The moment one begins to talk of *ahimsa* a series of trifling questions are mooted, *e.g.*, whether it is permissible to kill dogs, tigers and wolves, snakes, lice, etc., and whether one may eat brinjals or potatoes. Or else the questioner engages in a disputation over the question of maintaining an army or of offering armed resistance. Nobody seems to trouble to inquire how the principle of *ahimsa* should be worked out as part of education. Will you kindly shed some light on this question ?”

This is not a new problem. It has been discussed threadbare in these columns off and on in one shape or another. But I know that I have not succeeded in making it absolutely clear to my readers. The task, I am afraid, is beyond my capacity. But I should be thankful if I could succeed in contributing somewhat to its solution.

The introductory part of the question shows that questions betraying a narrow outlook are often put. By unnecessarily exercising ourselves over conundrums about the justifiability of man's killing creatures and animals of a lower order, we often seem to forget our primary duties. Every one of us is not faced every day with the question of killing obnoxious animals. Most of us have not developed courage and love enough to practise *ahimsa* with regard to dangerous reptiles. We do not destroy the vipers of ill-will and anger in our own bosom, but we dare to raise futile discussions about the propriety of killing obnoxious creatures and we thus move in a vicious circle. We fail in the primary duty and lay the unction to our souls that we are refraining from killing obnoxious life. One who desires to practise *ahimsa* must for the time being forget all about snakes etc. Let him not worry if he cannot avoid killing them,

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\* The questions were put to Gandhiji by students of the Gujarat Vidya-pith, Ahmedabad, where he used to give weekly talks for some time.

but try for all he is worth to overcome the anger and ill-will of men by his patient endeavour as a first step toward cultivating universal love.

Abjure brinjals or potatoes by all means, if you will, but do not for heaven's sake begin to feel yourself self-righteous or flatter yourself that you are practising *ahimsa* on that account. The very idea is enough to make one blush. *Ahimsa* is not a mere matter of dietetics, it transcends it. What a man eats or drinks matters little ; it is the self-denial, the self-restraint behind it that matters. By all means practise as much restraint in the choice of the articles of your diet as you like. The restraint is commendable, even necessary, but it touches only the fringe of *ahimsa*. A man may allow himself a wide latitude in the matter of diet and yet may be a personification of *ahimsa* and compel our homage, if his heart overflows with love and melts at another's woe, and has been purged of all passions. On the other hand a man always overscrupulous in diet is an utter stranger to *ahimsa* and a pitiful wretch, if he is a slave to selfishness and passions and is hard of heart.

Whether India should have an army or not, whether or not one may offer armed resistance to Government, — these are momentous questions that we shall have to solve one day. The Congress has in its creed already furnished an answer to them in part. But important as these questions are, they do not much concern the man in the street, they do not touch the aspect of *ahimsa* with which an educationist or a student is concerned. *Ahimsa* in relation to the life of a student stands quite apart from these questions of high politics. *Ahimsa* in education must have an obvious bearing on the mutual relations of the students. Where the whole atmosphere is redolent with the pure fragrance of *ahimsa*, boys and girls studying together will live like brothers and sisters, in freedom and yet in self-imposed restraint ; the students will be bound to the teachers in ties of filial love, mutual respect and mutual trust. This pure atmosphere will of itself be a continual object lesson in *ahimsa*. The students brought up in such an atmosphere will always distinguish themselves by their charity and breadth of view, and a special talent for service. Social evils will cease to present any difficulty to them, the very intensity of their love being enough to burn out those evils. For instance the very

idea of child-marriage will appear repugnant to them. They will not even think of penalizing the parents of brides by demanding dowries from them. And how dare they after marriage regard their wives as chattel or simply a means of gratifying their lust? How will a young man brought up in such an environment of *ahimsa* ever think of fighting a brother of his own or a different faith? At any rate no one will think of calling himself a votary of *ahimsa* and do all or any of these things.

To sum up. *Ahimsa* is a weapon of matchless potency. It is the *summum bonum* of life. It is an attribute of the brave, in fact it is their all. It does not come within reach of the coward. It is no wooden or lifeless dogma, but a living and a life-giving force. It is the special attribute of the soul. That is why it has been described as the highest *dharma* (law). In the hands of the educationist, therefore, it ought to take the form of the purest love, ever fresh, an ever gushing spring of life expressing itself in every act. Ill-will cannot stand in its presence. The sun of *ahimsa* carries all the hosts of darkness such as hatred, anger and malice before himself. *Ahimsa* in education shines clear and far and can no more be hidden, even as the sun cannot be hidden by any means. One may be sure that when the Vidyapith is filled with the atmosphere of this *ahimsa*, its students will no more be troubled by puzzling conundrums.

*Young India*, 6-9-1928

## TRUE HOLIDAY MAKING . .

A correspondent invites me to warn those who care against turning during the forthcoming Divali holidays good money into fireworks, bad sweets and unhygienic illuminations. I heartily respond. If I had my way I should have people to do house cleaning and heart cleaning and provide innocent and instructive amusements for children during these days. Fireworks I know are the delight of children, but they are so because we the elders have habituated them to fireworks. I have not known the untutored African children wanting or appreciating fireworks. They have dances instead. What can be better or healthier for children than sports and picnics to which they will take not bazar-made sweets of doubtful value but fresh and dried fruit ? Children both rich and poor may also be trained to do house cleaning and whitewashing themselves. It will be something if they are coaxed to recognize the dignity of labour if only during holidays to begin with. But the point I wish to emphasize is that at least a part, if not the whole, of the money saved by doing away with fireworks etc., should be given to the cause of *khadi* or if that is anathema, then to any other cause in which the poorest are served. There cannot be greater joy to men and women and young and old than that they think of and associate the poorest of the land with them in their holidays.

*Young India*, 25-10-1928



## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

A student of the Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad, writes :

“What concrete form ought religious instruction to take in the Vidyapith ?”

To me religion means truth and *ahimsa* or rather truth alone, because truth includes *ahimsa*, *ahimsa* being the necessary and indispensable means for its discovery. Therefore, anything that promotes the practice of these virtues is a means for imparting religious education and the best way to do this, in my opinion, is for the teachers rigorously to practise these virtues in their own person. Their very association with the boys, whether on the playground or in the class room, will then give the pupils a fine training in these fundamental virtues.

So much for instruction in the universal essentials of religion. A curriculum of religious instruction should include a study of the tenets of faiths other than one's own. For this purpose the students should be trained to cultivate the habit of understanding and appreciating the doctrines of various great religions of the world in a spirit of reverence and broad-minded tolerance. This if properly done would help to give them a spiritual assurance and a better appreciation of their own religion. There is one rule, however, which should always be kept in mind while studying all great religions and that is that one should study them only through the writings of known votaries of the respective religions. For instance, if one wants to study the *Bhagavata* one should do so not through a translation of it made by a hostile critic but one prepared by a lover of the *Bhagavata*. Similarly to study the Bible one should study it through the commentaries of devoted Christians. This study of other religions besides one's own will give one a grasp of the rock-bottom unity of all religions and afford a glimpse also of that universal and absolute truth which lies beyond the 'dust of creeds and faiths'.

Let no one even for a moment entertain the fear that a reverent study of other religions is likely to weaken or shake one's faith in one's own. The Hindu system of philosophy

regards all religions as containing the elements of truth in them and enjoins an attitude of respect and reverence towards them all. This of course presupposes regard for one's own religion. Study and appreciation of other religions need not cause a weakening of that regard ; it should mean extension of that regard to other religions.

In this respect religion stands on the same footing as culture. Just as preservation of one's own culture does not mean contempt for that of others, but requires assimilation of the best that there may be in all the other cultures, even so should be the case with religion. Our present fears and apprehensions are a result of the poisonous atmosphere that has been generated in the country, the atmosphere of mutual hatred, ill-will and distrust. We are constantly labouring under a nightmare of fear lest some one should stealthily undermine our faith or the faith of those who are dear and near to us. But this unnatural state will cease when we have learnt to cultivate respect and tolerance towards other religions and their votaries.

*Young India*, 6-12-1928

## A SINDH CURSE

The Amils of Sindh are probably the most advanced community in that province. But in spite of all their advance, there are some serious abuses of which they seem to have a monopoly. Of these the custom of *deti-leti* is not the least serious. I have more than once remarked upon it in these columns. My attention was drawn to this abuse during my very first visit to Sindh and I was invited to speak to the Amil friends about it. Though no doubt isolated work has been done in the direction of removing this abuse, no organized effort seems to have been made to end the evil. The Amils are a compact little community. The seriousness of the evil is not questioned by anybody. I have not known a single Amil to defend the vile custom. It has persisted because it is a custom patronized by the educated youth among the Amils. Their mode of life is above the means they can honestly command. Hence they have thrown all scruples

to the wind and do not mind degrading themselves by prostituting the institution of marriage for their own base ends. And this one vicious habit has told upon the quality of their national work which otherwise by their intellect and education they are capable of doing to the great benefit of the country.

In order to put an end to this evil, a provisional committee has already been formed now of which Acharya A. T. Gidwani has accepted the presidentship. This is as it should be. When he undertook to go to Sindh from Brindaban it was naturally expected that he would throw himself with zest into all desirable movements that conduce to national wellbeing. It is to be hoped that the provisional committee will soon become a permanent organization and under his able leadership the reform which is already belated will make steady progress.

The Secretary, Shri Mirchandani, asks me for suggestions. The only suggestion that I can think of just now is that this organization should create a public opinion against *deti-leti* that would become irresistible. Young educated Amils are able to squeeze the poor parents of marriageable girls only because there is no active public opinion against the custom. There should be work done in the schools and colleges and amongst the parents of girls. The parents should so educate their daughters that they would refuse to marry a young man who wanted a price for marrying and would rather remain spinsters than be party to the degrading terms. The only honourable terms in marriage are mutual love and mutual consent.

*Young India*, 27-12-1928

## DUTY OF RESISTANCE

The strike of nearly seven hundred students of the Gujarat College, Ahmedabad, which has now gone on for over 20 days is no longer a matter merely of local importance. A labour strike is bad enough, a students' strike is worse, whether it is justly declared or unjustly. It is worse because of the consequences it entails in the end and because of the status of the parties. Unlike labourers, students are educated and can have no material interest to serve by means of strikes, and unlike employers, heads of educational institutions have no interest in conflict with that of the students. Students moreover are supposed to be embodiments of discipline. A strike of students therefore produces far-reaching consequences and can only be justified in extraordinary circumstances.

But though occasions for students' strikes in well-ordered schools and colleges must be rare, it is not impossible to conceive such as to warrant strikes on their part. Thus for instance if a principal running counter to public opinion refuses to recognize a day of universal rejoicing as a holiday which both parents and their school — or college — going children may desire, students will be justified in declaring a strike for that day. Such occasions will be more frequent in India as the students grow more self-conscious and become more alive to a sense of their responsibility to the nation.

In the case of the Gujarat College, I cannot help saying that so far as I have been able to judge, the students have had ample reason for the strike. It is quite wrong to say, as has been said in some quarters, that the strike has been engineered by a few mischievous students. It is impossible for a handful of mischief-makers to hold together seven hundred boys for over a fortnight. As it is, there are responsible citizens advising and guiding the students. Chief among these is Shri Mavlankar, a pleader of experience and known for his wisdom and moderation. He has been in touch with the Principal and is firmly of opinion that the students are absolutely in the right.

The facts can be briefly told. The students absented themselves from College with the rest of the boys all over India on

the Simon Boycott Day. The absence was no doubt unauthorized. The students were technically in the wrong. They should have at least asked for formal permission before they absented themselves. But boys are the same all the world over. One might as well hope to restrain the winds as hope to curb the roused enthusiasm of students. There was at best a youthful indiscretion. This was condoned by the Principal after a great deal of negotiation ; the boys being permitted optionally to appear for their terminal examination on a fee of Rs. 3 each, it being understood that the majority would appear and that those who did not would not be in any way punished. The Principal, however, it is alleged, broke his pledge and put up notice making it compulsory for the boys to appear for the terminal examination upon payment of Rs. 3 each. This naturally incensed the boys. They felt, 'If the salt loseth its savour, wherewith shall it be salted ?' They therefore struck work. The rest is simple. The strike continues and friends and critics alike certify to the great self-restraint and correct conduct of the boys. In my opinion, students of a college are in duty bound to resist such breach of honour by their Principal as is alleged against the Principal of the Gujarat College. It is impossible to tender to a teacher that unreserved respect to which he is entitled by reason of his honourable calling when he is found to be guilty of breach of honour.

If the students are resolute there can be but one end to the strike, viz., withdrawal of the offending notice and an absolute promise of immunity from any punishment to the students. Indeed the most proper thing would be for the Government to appoint another Principal for the College.

There is in the Government Colleges too much of espionage and persecution of boys holding pronounced political views or taking any part in political gatherings not liked by the Government. It is high time that this unwarranted interference was stopped. In a country groaning as India is under foreign rule, it is impossible to prevent students from taking part in movements for national freedom. All that can be done is to regulate their enthusiasm so as not to interfere with their studies. They may not become partisans taking sides with warring parties. But they have a right to be left free to hold and actively to advocate what political opinion they choose. The function of

educational institutions is to impart education to the boys and girls who choose to join them and therethrough to help to mould their character, never to interfere with their political or other non-moral activities outside the school room.

The question therefore raised by the strike of Ahmedabad students is of first rate importance and they deserve the sympathy and support of other scholastic institutions and the public in general. Parents are as much concerned with the strike as school-going boys and girls. For the Ahmedabad students have, I understand, acted throughout with the approval of their parents or guardians.

*Young India*, 24-1-1929

## 62

## STUDENTS' STRIKE

The strike of the students of the Gujarat College, Ahmedabad, continues with unabated vigour. The students are showing determination, calmness and solidarity that are worthy of all praise. They are beginning only now to feel their strength. And I venture to think that they will feel it still more if they will do some constructive work. It is my conviction that our schools and colleges, instead of making us manly, make us obsequious, timid, indecisive and ballastless. Manliness consists not in bluff, bravado or lordliness. It consists in daring to do the right and facing consequences, whether it is in matters social, political or other. It consists in deeds not in words. The students have now before them probably a long time of waiting. They must not be disheartened if events shape themselves so. It will then be up to the public to intervene. It will be up to the student world all over India to vindicate the right which is entirely on the side of the students. Those who would study the question in all the fulness can secure from Shri Mavlankar copies of all the relevant papers. The fight of the Ahmedabad students is a fight not for their own personal rights, it is a fight for the honour of students in general and therefore in a sense of national honour. Students who have been fighting so pluckily as these are doing deserve the fullest public support.

And this the students will surely get if they will engage in some constructive national activity. They will lose nothing by doing national work. They need not confine themselves to the Congress programme, if it does not commend itself to them. The chief thing is to demonstrate their capacity for holding together and doing independent solid work. The charge is often brought against us that we are good only at oratorical displays and fruitless momentary demonstrations, but fail when we are called upon to *do* work that requires cohesion, co-operation, grit and unflinching determination. The students have a splendid opportunity of falsifying the charge. Will they rise to the occasion?

They may not lose faith on any account whatsoever. The College is the nation's property. If we were not demoralized, a foreign Government should never be able to hold our property or make it practically criminal for students to take part in the nation's battle for freedom, which it should be the duty and privilege of students to lead.

*Young India*, 31-1-1929

## 63

### TO THE STUDENTS OF KARACHI \*

"Well, young men," Gandhiji began, "an English proverb says, 'Imitation is the sincerest flattery'. But whilst you have waxed eloquent in praise of me in your address, I find that in practice you are violating all those things for which I stand. It looks almost as if you meant to say, 'We know what you want but all the same we are going to do just the contrary.' You could not possibly have meant to offer me a deliberate insult. Then, was it that you wanted to pull my leg, by translating me to the frozen Himalayan heights of 'Mahatmaship' and claiming for yourselves absolution from having to follow my precepts? But be that as it may, now that you have called me here, you shall render me an account for all your misdeeds." And call them to account he did as probably they never had been called in their

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\* Speech delivered by Gandhiji on receiving a joint address from the college students of Karachi on 5-2-1929.

life, speaking 'daggers' to them, only the 'daggers' here were calculated not to wound but to heal like a surgeon's knife. He first twitted them for preparing their address in a foreign tongue which they ought to have done if only out of a sense of courtesy in Hindi or failing that in Sindhi in which case he would have appreciated their delicacy. Even foreigners when they came to see him tried to use as many Hindustani words in his presence as their vocabulary allowed because they knew that it would please him. What excuse had they then to use any other than their mother tongue on the present occasion? The Nehru Committee Report had recommended that Hindustani should be the *lingua franca* and official language of India under Swaraj. "But probably you will perhaps say," he humorously observed, "'We are Independencewallas.' Well then, I would remind you of the example of General Botha who refused to speak in English even in the presence of the King at the time of the South African settlement after the Boer War, but preferred to use Dutch only taking the help of an interpreter. That was the only thing that a representative of a freedom-loving people could do." Referring to their foreign fripperies and their extravagant ways of living, he said, "As students of economics, you ought to know that the fees that you pay do not cover even a fraction of the amount that is spent on your education from the public exchequer. Has it ever occurred to you, my fine young men, as to where the rest of the money comes from? It comes from the pockets of the poor, the living skeletons of Orissa, who go about with lack-lustre eyes and despair written on their face and a gnawing hunger in their stomach from year's end to year's end, eking out their existence on a handful of rotten rice and a pinch of dirty salt flung at them by the insulting munificence of the rich Gujaratis and Marwadis. What have you done for these brethren of yours? Instead of wearing homespun *khadi* prepared by the pure hands of your sisters that brings them a few additional coppers, you go in for foreign stuffs thereby helping to send 60 crores of rupees, out of the country annually and to snatch away the bread from the mouths of the poor of India. The result is that the country is ground to powder. Our commerce instead of enriching our country has become an instrument of our exploitation and our commercial classes have been reduced to the position of commission agents for Lancashire



and Manchester, getting hardly 5 per cent as their share of the profits of the trade, out of which is built all the seeming magnificence of our big cities." It was Lord Salisbury, he continued, who had observed on a historic occasion that since India had to be bled, the lancet must be applied to the congested parts. And if revenue had to be derived by the process of bleeding in Lord Salisbury's time, how much more so it must be now, when India had become poorer as a result of all these years of exploitation? They should not forget that it was out of this revenue which represented the life-blood of the Indian masses that their education was financed. And again, did they realize that the education which they received was at the expense of the degradation of their countrymen since money spent on it was derived from the notorious liquor revenue? Before God's judgment seat, therefore, they would have to answer the dread question, 'What hast thou done with thine brothers?' What answer would they then make, he asked them. He then went on to cite to them the instance of Hazrat Omar who, when the Mussulman nobles fell into luxurious ways of living and took to wearing fine clothes, asked them to take themselves away from him saying that they were no true followers of the Prophet who did not always use bread prepared from coarse flour and wear coarse clothes. He wished that they would take a leaf out of the life of that God-fearing Caliph.

And, again, was it not a shame that when Narayandas Malkani wanted young men to help him in the flood relief work in Sindh he had to go abegging for assistance to Gujarat? And lastly, what had they to say with regard to the scandalous custom of *deti-leti*? Instead of making their wives the queens of their homes and of their hearts, they had converted them into chattels to be bought and sold! Was this the lesson that they had imbibed from the reading of English literature? Woman had been described as the *ardhangana* or the better half of man. But they had reduced her to the position of a slave and the result was the state of paralysis in which they found their country. "Swaraj is not meant for cowards," he concluded, "but for those who would mount smilingly to the gallows and refuse even to allow their eyes to be bandaged. Promise that you will wipe off the stain of *deti-leti*, that you will die to restore your sisters and wives to their full dignity and freedom. Then I shall

understand that you are ready for the freedom of your country." Addressing next the girl students who were present there he said, "As for your young girls, to you I will only say, that if I had a girl under my charge I would rather keep her a maiden all her life than give her away to one who expected a single pice for taking her for his wife." Finally he banteringly warned the students that if they contented themselves merely with singing his praise without meaning to follow his advice, theirs would be the conduct worthy of *bhats* or bards only, not gentlemen.

*Young India*, 14-2-1929

## A PLEA FOR PURITY \*

"To own up one's defects is the first step towards reform. I will not therefore speak to you about failings referred to in your address as I take it that having confessed them you will spare no effort to eradicate them; but I will speak to you on one or two other moot questions." He then proceeded to exhort them to stamp out the liquor habit from their midst. They might think that moderate drinking might be allowed since it seemed to do them no harm. But as the *Gita* said, one had to shape one's conduct not merely according to one's own requirements but also with an eye to the effect that it would have on others. And if they saw the terrible havoc that this fell habit was causing among the working classes of India they would take a solemn vow not to touch liquor. He next warned them against the baneful poisonous literature from the West that was inundating the country and sought under the respectable and attractive garb of science to seduce them from the path of purity and self-restraint. Manifestoes justifying self-indulgence were sometimes issued over the signatures of bishops, doctors, and other men of weight and influence but they should never allow themselves to be drawn away from the strait and narrow path of virtue. The path of self-indulgence and moral indiscipline

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\* From the speech delivered before the students of the Sindh National College, Hyderabad, on 14-2-1929.

was the surest way to perdition. He appealed to them to cultivate a snow-white purity of mind and body and prayed to God that He might give them the wisdom and strength for it.

*Young India*, 28-2-1929

## 65

## POOR BOYS' FUND

The Headmaster of the New English School, Achra writes as follows :

"In accordance with the appeal of our national leaders for keeping Lalaji's memory green, we the teachers and the students of the New English School, Achra, District Ratnagiri, have sent our collection of Rs. 101 only as a tribute to our great patriot to Shri Birla, the Treasurer in Calcutta. It is collected from every community without distinction. We have arranged here a meeting and started a fund in the name of late Lalaji, called the Lalaji Poor Boys' Fund. Thus the national spirit is being created in the hearts of the pupils. There are two *mahar* (untouchable) students in our school who have been sitting with other students on the same bench. I am glad to tell you that some 30 boys have determined neither to buy foreign goods nor to drink tea. They are interested in the *khadi* movement and have bought it for about Rs. 35. I have supplied them with it from Vengurla, but it being costly, the poor ones were disappointed, and so we hope that steps will be taken to lessen its price at least for the poor."

I am sorry that owing to my travels at the time the letter was received, it remained buried amongst my papers for nearly two months. The amount has been already acknowledged but the letter has a value of its own, apart from the collection. For the teachers and the boys have responded not only to the letter of the appeal but also to its spirit in that they have determined to give up foreign goods and even tea. I suggest to the teachers that the vow to give up foreign goods will not be kept up either by the teachers or by the boys. It is too sweeping to be fulfilled. For instance, neither the teachers nor the boys will give up foreign books, nor foreign pins, nor foreign watches, nor foreign needles. I suggest to them a revision of their vows. It will be better if they will name the foreign articles which they will refrain from using.

As to *khadi*, I have pointed out often enough that it is cheap at any price, so long as it is sold at the cost price plus a small addition for the upkeep of the stock where it is sold.

Let it be borne in mind that during the seven years of its career *khadi* has cheapened itself by 50 per cent. If there was more patronage it would be cheaper still. And why will not poor boys be taught to help themselves rather than that they should be taught to expect *khadi* at cheaper than cost price and thus to expect people poorer than themselves to give a gratuity ? Boys and girls should be taught to spin their own yarn during their idle hours. I have suggested at least half an hour per day. They can then even weave that yarn, or if that becomes difficult as it may well become so, send the yarn to an agent of the All India Spinners' Association and get *khadi* of the same weight and containing yarn of the same count merely for the cost of weaving.

*Young India*, 14-3-1929

## 66

### BE TRUE

I promised to give a free rendering of a remarkable address in Sindhi presented to me by the students of Hyderabad. Much other work crowded it out. I now give it below :

"We welcome you heartily on behalf of the Hyderabad students. We are aware that we are not entitled to have you in our midst as we have not carried out your precepts ; but we hope that our hearts would respond after having your spoken word. We will not deceive you. We therefore propose to open out our hearts to you.

"Our town is a centre of education. Compared with the other towns, we have a larger proportion of those who have passed the Indian Civil Service examination. We have one college here, three high schools for boys, two for girls and numerous other English and Sindhi schools. In the English schools alone there are 4,000 students. But out of these, unfortunately there are not more than 22 or 25 students wearing pure *khadi* and there cannot be more than 3 or 4 per cent wearing indigenous mill cloth. The others wear indifferently *swadeshi* and *videshi*. The vast majority only wear *videshi*. You know well enough that our living is extravagant. We incline towards the English language and Western civilization rather than towards our mother tongue and our own culture. We cannot show much of service or simplicity, aware as we are of the poverty of our country. We know that it is good for the country that we should use *khadi* and *swadeshi* articles ; but we regret that we were unmoved even when the heart-rending cry of the flood-stricken fell on our ears. And this indifference is the cause

of the absence of our response to the general distress surrounding us. Our Association has been doing some work during the last four years. But there is not much in it of which we can make any boast.

"We are ashamed to have to refer to the evil custom of *deti-leti*. In spite of having received higher education we do not hesitate to squeeze thousands of rupees from the wife's relations. Some of us regard it as our birthright to obtain money through our wives. Many have no sense of self-respect. In spite of the higher education amongst girls, hardly half-a-dozen have been courageous enough to resent it as an insult to have to buy their husbands. Recently there has been a boycott resolution against those who countenance *deti-leti*. But people have not yet freed themselves from the evil.

"But we do not want to give you only the dark side of the picture. There is a bright side also. You may feel sure that our capacity for good is limitless. We can become torchbearers throughout Sindh; for we are the inheritors of traditions left in this very town by Sadhu Hiranand, Diwan Navalrai, Bhai Balachandra, Diwan Dayaram and other such heroes. Even at the present moment we have in our town men who are noted for their organizing capacity and discipline. We have in our midst men who have shown capacity for leadership in the political, the social, the educational, and the literary field. They have taken a leading part in all patriotic endeavours. Merchants of Hyderabad are to be found carrying on their enterprise in all parts of the globe. We wish to make no parade of these things, but we want to show that we are not devoid of capacity for work or service. If our energies can be once organized, it is possible to show good progress. We want to feel that we have not forfeited the right to your affection because we have not acted up to your precepts, because we know that it would be only through your affection that our hearts will expand."

I have given a free rendering of this address first because I want to keep the students to their promise and secondly because it may serve as an example to other students. Let me remind the students of Hyderabad that although they did not know the contents of the address before it was read to me, in answer to the question deliberately put by me, they with one voice endorsed the sentiments expressed in the address and promised that they would make every endeavour to make up for past indifference and neglect. I therefore expect them to boycott completely foreign cloth and take to *khadi*. I expect them too to boycott *deti-leti* once for all.

For the other students let this address be a model. Addresses containing mere praise of leaders are really useless. Those who need such praise should not have any address presented to them. If addresses are presented to those whom students really love and honour they should contain references

that might be of some service to them. I do not wish to suggest that every address should be like this one. But I do suggest that every address should have a local touch, a local significance and should refer to some matter of importance. Real affection is not shown through praise but through service. Self-purification is a preliminary process, an indispensable condition of real service. I have therefore welcomed this address as a token of sincere desire on the part of the students of Hyderabad to go through this preliminary process of self-purification, a consummation much to be desired during this year of grace and preparation.

*Young India*, 14-3-1929

## 67

## MESSAGE TO YOUTH \*

Fellow students and friends,

I tender my hearty thanks for your address as also for what I hope is a generous purse for *Daridranarayana*. Those of you who are Indians are not unaware of the meaning of *Daridranarayana*; but the Burmese students may not perhaps know its significance. *Daridranarayana* is one of the millions of names by which humanity knows God Who is unnameable, and unfathomable by human understanding, and it means God of the poor, God appearing in the hearts of the poor. It was the name used in one of his intuitive and sacred moments by the late Deshabandhu Das. It is not a name adopted by me out of my own experience, but it is a heritage from Deshabandhu. He used the word in connection with the mission to which, among several others, my life is dedicated, I mean the gospel of the *charkha* or the spinning wheel. I know there are still many who laugh at this little wheel and regard this particular activity of mine as an aberration. In spite of the criticism and ridicule which is levelled at it I adhere to the gospel of the spinning wheel as one of my most substantial activities, and I feel certain — as I am certain that I am addressing you at the present moment — that a time is coming when all the scoffing will cease

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\* Speech delivered before the students of Rangoon.

and the scoffers will kneel and pray with me that the spinning wheel may find an abiding place in the desolate homes of the underfed starving millions of India. I have not hesitated to bring that message to the Indians who have found their home here. I have no right to approach the Burmans with an appeal for funds for *khadi*, but I think I have a right to approach the Indians who find their livelihood and more in this land of yours, and to ask them to part with their substance for feeding *Daridranarayana*.

A friend told me, I do not know with how much authority, that there was a talk amongst the students that it was not proper for me to make collections for *khadi* in Burma, and that I must devote something for some work to be done in Burma for the Burmans. If there is any Burman here with that conviction, he will, I hope, go away at the end of the meeting convinced that it will not be right on my part to use any part of the moneys here to purposes in Burma. It should hurt your dignity, it should hurt your self-respect to bring a man all the way from Sabarmati to raise funds for local enterprise. You should be able to find the wherewithal for those purposes and leave me free to do whatever I can for my mission on behalf of the starving millions of India.

You have claimed for me an honour in connection with the student world which I dare not appropriate. But I am endeavouring to claim another honour and that is to become a servant of the student world — not only of India, not only of Burma, but, if it is not too high a claim, the student world throughout the universe. I am in touch with some students in the remotest corners of the earth, and if God gives me a few more years I might be able to make good that claim. I know that I have established a vital connection with thousands and thousands of students in India. I was wondering whether the majority of students here would be Indians or Burmese — I should have been glad to know the percentage of Indians, I should have loved to know something of the life of the students here. But it does not matter whether you are Burmese or Indians, you have used the proper word for the mass of students all over the world — the students' republic. You have claimed for yourself irresponsibility. May it be yours, if it be within limits. The moment the limits are crossed you will cease to be students. A student does not cease to be a student the moment he leaves his scholastic

career. At any rate, looking back to 40 years I find that when I left my studies I was entering the threshold of the student's career. And as one who has had some experience of life, take it from me that mere book reading will be of little help to you in afterlife. I know from correspondence with the students all over India what wrecks they have become by having stuffed their brains with information derived from a cartload of books. Some have become unhinged, others have become lunatics, some have been leading a life of helpless impurity. My heart goes out to them when they say that try as much as they might, they are what they are, because they cannot overpower the devil. 'Tell us,' they plaintively ask, 'how to get rid of the devil, how to get rid of the impurity that has seized us.' When I ask them to take *Ramanama* and kneel before God and seek His help, they come to me and say, 'We do not know where God is. We do not know what it is to pray.' That is the state to which they have been reduced. I have therefore been asking the students to be on their guard, not to read all the literature that is within their reach, and I ask their teachers to cultivate their hearts and establish with the students a heart-contact. I have felt that the teachers' work lies more outside than inside the lecture room. In this work-a-day life where teachers and professors work for the wages they get they have no time to give to the students outside the class room, and that is the greatest stumbling block in the development of the life and character of students today. But unless the teachers are prepared to give all their time outside the class room to their students, not much can be done. Let them fashion their hearts rather than their brains. Let them help them to erase every word out of their dictionary, which means disappointment and despair. (*Applause.*) I am trying to put before you all that is welling up in my breast. Pray don't interrupt it with your applause. It will stand between yourselves and your hearts. Never own a defeat in a sacred cause and make up your minds henceforth that you will be pure and that you will find a response from God. But God never answers the prayers of the arrogant, nor the prayers of those who bargain with Him. Have you heard the story of *Gajendra Moksha*? I ask the Burmese students here who do not know one of the greatest of all poems, one of the divinest things of the world, to learn it from their Indian friends. A



Tamil saying has always remained in my memory and it means, God is the Help of the helpless. If you would ask Him to help you, you would go to Him in all your nakedness, approach Him without reservation, also without fear or doubts as to how He can help a fallen being like you. He who has helped millions, who have approached Him, is He going to desert you? He makes no exceptions whatsoever and you will find that every one of your prayers will be answered. The prayer of even the most impure will be answered. I am telling this out of my personal experience. I have gone through the purgatory. Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven and everything will be added unto you. Do not go to your books or to your teachers with impure hearts. Go with the purest hearts and you will get from them what you want. If you want to become patriots, real patriots and protectors of the weak, espousers of the cause of the poor and the oppressed to whom the education you get is not available, if you want to become guardians of the purity of every girl and woman in Burma, purify your hearts first. If you approach your mission in life in that spirit all will be well.

*Young India*, 4-4-1929

## 68

## AMONG THE STUDENTS \*

"I am not prepared," Gandhiji proceeded, "to hear this confession of incapacity from students. All your scholarship, all your study of Shakespeare and Wordsworth would be vain if at the same time you do not build your character, and attain mastery over your thoughts and actions. When you have attained self-mastery and learnt to control your passions you will not utter notes of despair. You cannot give your hearts and profess poverty of action. To give one's heart is to give all. You must, to start with, have hearts to give. And this you can do if you will cultivate them.

"But what is it instead that we find today? The students in the U. P. today get married, not under compulsion from the

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\* Speech delivered before the college students of Agra.

parents I am told, but of their own insistent desire. During student days you are expected not to dissipate energy but to conserve it. I observe that over 50 per cent of you are married. If you will make the best of a bad job, you will in spite of your marriage put a severe restraint upon your passions and lead whilst you are prosecuting your studies a life of pure *brahmacharya*. And you will find that at the end of your studies you are all the better for that restraint, physically, mentally, and spiritually. Do not by any means consider that I am presenting to you something that is utterly impossible of execution. The cult of those, who, though they may be married, are exercising perfect self-restraint on themselves, is increasing with much profit to themselves and to the general benefit of mankind. To those who are unmarried I would appeal to resist temptation. After all we are a slave nation struggling to break asunder the fetters that keep us in that condition. Surely you at least should realize the sinfulness of bringing slave children into the world. Many young men from various colleges, not excluding your own, write to me pathetic letters asking me to tell them how they can get rid of their mental weakness. I have suggested to them the age old prescription. They will no longer feel helpless if they will seek the help of God through all their weakness. The same friend that told me about the marriage evil also complained to me that students were guilty of involving their parents in extravagant expenditure on marriage ceremonies. Surely marriage, you ought to know, is a sacrament and ought not to carry any expenditure with it. If those who have money will not curb the desire to spend it on feasting and revelry, the poor people will want to copy them and incur debts in doing so. You will, if you are brave, rise in revolt against any extravagant expenditure when you are ready to be married."

Coming to the subject of *khadi* Gandhiji said he was not ashamed to be called *khadi-mad*, and those who invited him to address them must be prepared to listen to his message of madness. As he was coming over, he was shown from a distance the hostels which they were occupying. They looked like palaces to him. If the students were not selfish they would wish every son and daughter of India to live even as they were living. But they knew full well that such a thing was impossible of fulfilment for many a generation yet to come in a country which was known

to have at least ten crores of its population going without a full meal per day. If they believed in this statement which they could verify themselves, if they explore the village conditions of India, they would one and all identify themselves somewhat with their starving countrymen by adopting *khadi*.

*Young India*, 19-9-1929

## 69

## LOVE OF THE MOTHER TONGUE \*

Gandhiji expressed his painful surprise that the students did not know the horror he had of receiving addresses in English from bodies and audiences which had no excuse whatsoever for so doing. He reminded the students that in Lucknow there was the least occasion for the use of English. Lucknow was the abode of the national language. The students knew that the speaker had no difficulty in following even high-flown Lucknow Urdu. He told them that if they had no love for their mother tongue or the national language which was Hindustani they could not expect to be enlisted as soldiers in India's fight for Swaraj. No one who was indifferent to his mother tongue could claim to be a lover of his country, and he reminded them of the late General Botha who, although he knew English, insisted, when he went to London, upon speaking to the King in Dutch through an interpreter. The King instead of resenting this insistence appreciated it as a natural thing for an ambassador of a Dutch-speaking nation to do so. Even so must they have pride in their mother tongue.

*Young India*, 10-10-1929

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\* Report of a speech before the students of Lucknow on their presenting an address in English.

## MESSAGE TO THE SNATAKAS \*

You are doomed to disappointment if you compare your schools or colleges with Government schools and colleges. The two are different in kind. You cannot command the palatial buildings nor a multiplicity of highly paid and learned professors and teachers that Government institutions which live upon the people can command. You will not have them even if you have pecuniary resources at your disposal. The aim of Government institutions is pre-eminently to turn out clerks and others who would assist the alien Government to carry on its rule. The aim of national institutions is just the opposite. It is to turn out not clerks and the like but men determined to end the alien rule, cost what it may, and that at the earliest possible opportunity. Government institutions naturally must be loyal to the alien Government. National institutions can be loyal only to the country. Government institutions promise a lucrative career. National institutions promise instead only the barest maintenance for full service. You have just taken an oath to discharge a triple debt. Truly, as Max Muller reminded us, life with us is duty. Duty well done undoubtedly carries rights with it, but a man who discharges his obligations with an eye upon privileges, generally discharges them indifferently and often fails to attain the rights he might have expected, or when he succeeds in gaining them they turn out to be burdens. Yours therefore is the privilege of service only. There can be no rest for you till you have played your part in gaining freedom for the country. If you will assimilate this fundamental distinction between Government educational institutions and your own, you will never regret your choice. But I know that your fewness worries you often, and some of you doubt the wisdom of having given up your old institutions and secretly cherish a desire to return to them. I suggest to you that in every great cause it is not the number of fighters that counts but it is the quality of which they are made that becomes the deciding factor. The greatest

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\* Convocation address delivered at the Kashi Vidyapith.

men of the world have always stood alone. Take the great prophets, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed — they all stood alone like many others whom I can name. But they had living faith in themselves and their God ; and believing as they did that God was on their side, they never felt lonely. You may recall the occasion when pursued by a numerous enemy Abu Bakr, who was accompanying the Prophet in his flight, trembled to think of their fate and said, ‘ Look at the number of the enemies that is overtaking us. What shall we two do against these heavy odds ? ’ Without a moment’s reflection the Prophet rebuked his faithful companion by saying, ‘ No, Abu Bakr, we are three, for God is with us.’ Or take the invincible faith of Bibhishana and Prahlada. I want you to have that same living faith in yourselves and God.

*Young India*, 10-10-1929

## 71

## AT BANARAS \*

“What are you doing to deserve the monumental service of the great son of India ? He expects you to become not literary giants but defenders of Hinduism and the country through expressing true religion in your own lives,” was the burden of the message. “Remember, that this, the greatest creation of Malaviyaji’s, will be judged not by the magnificence of the buildings or the 1,300 acres that they cover, but by what you become,” said Gandhiji in a voice that must have reached every nook and corner of the great amphitheatre where he was received. He then proceeded, “If you will express the requisite purity of character in action, you cannot do it better than through the spinning wheel. Of all the myriads of names of God, *Daridranarayana* is the most sacred inasmuch as it represents the untold millions of poor people as distinguished from the few rich people. The easiest and the best way of identifying yourselves somewhat with these starving millions is to spread the

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\* From the speech delivered to the students of the Hindu University.

message of the spinning wheel in the threefold manner suggested by me. You can spread it by becoming expert spinners, by wearing *khadi*, and by pecuniary contributions. Remember that millions will never have access to the facilities that Malaviyaji has provided for you. What return will you make to these your brothers and sisters ? You may be sure, that when he conceived the plan of this University, he had the question in mind, and he embarked upon the mission in the hope that you would so conduct yourselves as to deserve the training given to you."

*Young India*, 10-10-1929

## 72

## WHAT MAY YOUTH DO ?

I got now some time ago a letter on behalf of the Agra Youth League asking the following question :

"We are in the dark with regard to our main activities in future. We wish to co-operate with the peasants and neighbours of the locality but no practical method seems to be at hand. We hope that you will kindly suggest some practical way out of the difficulty. We think ours is not the only institution facing this difficulty. Accordingly, it is highly desirable that you should suggest a definite solution of this problem through the columns of *Navajivan* or *Young India*."

The address of the Youth League at Gorakhpur contained a similar sentiment and also asked how to face the bread problem that stared the youth in the face. In my opinion the two questions are intertwined and both can be solved, if the youth can be persuaded to make village life their goal rather than city life. We are inheritors of a rural civilization. The vastness of our country, the vastness of the population, the situation and the climate of the country have in my opinion destined it for a rural civilization. Its defects are well known but not one of them is irremediable. To uproot it and substitute for it an urban civilization seems to me an impossibility, unless we are prepared by some drastic means to reduce the population from three hundred million to three or say even thirty. I can therefore suggest remedies on the assumption that we must perpetuate the present rural civilization and to endeavour to rid it of its acknowledged

defects. This can only be done if the youth of the country will settle down to village life. And if they will do this, they must reconstruct their life and pass every day of their vacation in the village surrounding their colleges or high schools and those who have finished their education or are not receiving any should think of settling down in villages. The All India Spinners' Association with all its multifarious branches and institutions that have sprung up under its protection affords an easy opportunity to the students to qualify themselves for service and to maintain themselves honourably if they will be satisfied with the simple life which obtains in the villages. It maintains nearly 1,500 young men of the country drawing anything between Rs. 15 to Rs. 150, and it can take in almost an unlimited number of earnest, honest, and industrious young men who will not be ashamed of manual work. Then there are national educational institutions affording a similar though limited scope, limited only because national education is not in fashion. I therefore commend to the attention of all earnest young men who are dissatisfied with their existing surroundings and outlook to study these two great national institutions which are doing silent but most effective constructive work and which present the youth of the country with an opportunity both for service and for honourable maintenance. Whether however they avail themselves of these two great nation-building agencies or do not, let them penetrate the villages and find an unlimited scope for service, research and true knowledge. Professors would do well not to burden either their boys or girls with literary studies during the vacation but prescribe to them educative outings in the villages. Vacations must be utilized for recreation, never for memorizing books.

*Young India*, 7-11-1929

## ACADEMIC v. PRACTICAL

A student writes :

"Very often you give replies to your critics which are quite correct in the academic sense ; they give a sort of temporary satisfaction to the mind but in actual practice leave the riddle as unsolved as ever. Take for instance your saying, 'only a coward fights on the strength of numbers'. It is all right in the abstract. It does for the time being bring one a sort of mental reassurance, but of what avail is it in actual practice ? You preach your gospel of soul force to all and sundry. But do you think that there is any chance of your utopian advice being seriously taken by those who have not faith even in the spinning wheel and *khadi* ? Won't your preaching be like pouring water over a duck's neck utterly futile ?"

I certainly hope that my advice about soul force is not altogether wasted though it might seem unavailing for the time being. As an English proverb says, 'Constant dropping will wear away a stone'. And it is my faith that what seems utopian to the correspondent today will be regarded as practical tomorrow. History is replete with such instances. If the word 'soul force' appears a meaningless term to our students today, it only shows to what an abject plight we are reduced. For is it not most tragic, that things of the spirit, eternal verities should be regarded as utopian by our youth, and transitory makeshifts alone appeal to them as practical ?

We have an ocular demonstration of the futility of mere numbers before us every day. What stronger proof of the proposition can be needed than that a nation of three hundred million Indians is today being ruled by less than one *lakh* Englishmen ? The very sight of a lion puts to flight a thousand sheep. The reason is plain. The sheep are aware of their weakness, the lion of its strength. And the consciousness of strength in the latter overpowers the numerical strength of the former. By analogy may we not deduce that 'soul force' or 'spirit force' may not after all be a mere chimera or figment of imagination but a substantial reality ?

I do not wish to disparage the strength of numbers. It has its use but only when it is backed by the latent spirit force. Millions of ants can kill an elephant by together attacking it



in a vulnerable place. Their sense of solidarity, consciousness of oneness of spirit in spite of the diversity of bodies, in other words, their spirit force makes the ants irresistible. Even so the moment we develop a sense of mass unity like the ants, we too shall become irresistible and shall free ourselves from our chains.

It is my firm faith that the students of our national schools, a mere handful though they may be, if they are inspired by a real spirit of sacrifice and service and a living faith in their ideals, will stand the country in far greater stead than all the students in Government educational institutions put together. That quality is more than quantity is sound theory because it is true in practice. Instead I hold that what cannot be proved in practice cannot be sound in theory.

When Galileo declared that the earth was round like a ball and turned on its axis, he was ridiculed as a visionary and a dreamer and was greeted with abuse. But today we know that Galileo was right, and it was his opponents, who believed the earth to be stationary and flat like a dish, that were living in the cloudland of their ignorance.

Modern education tends to turn our eyes away from the spirit. The possibilities of the spirit force or soul force therefore do not appeal to us, and our eyes are consequently rivetted on the evanescent, transitory, material force. Surely this is the very limit of dull unimaginativeness.

But I live in hope and patience. I have an unshakable faith in the correctness of my proposition, a faith that is based on my and my companions' experience. And every student, if only he has got the faculty of patient, dispassionate research, can experimentally prove this for himself :

1. That mere numbers are useless.
2. That all force other than soul force is transitory and vain.

It goes without saying, that if the above propositions are correct, it should be the constant endeavour of every student to arm himself with this matchless weapon of spirit force by dint of self-discipline and self-purification.

## IN BRINDABAN \*

You will not have deserved the munificent donation of Raja Mahendra Pratap if you do not labour for your neighbours. Your education, if it is a vital thing; must shed its fragrance in your surroundings. You must devote a certain portion of your time daily to serving the people around in a practical manner. You must therefore be prepared to take the spade, the broomstick and the basket. You must become voluntary scavengers of this holy place. That would be the richest part of your education, not learning by heart literary theses.

*Young India*, 14-11-1929

## DEFINITE SUGGESTIONS

During the U. P. tour I received the following letter from Allahabad students :

"With reference to your article in a recent issue of *Young India* on rural civilization we beg to say that we appreciate your suggestion of going back to villages after finishing our education. But this statement is not a sufficient guide for us. We want some definite outline clearly chalked out for us and what we are expected to do. We are tired of hearing indefinite and vague suggestions. We have a burning desire to do everything for our countrymen, but we do not know where to begin definitely, and what hopes we may entertain as to the probable results and benefits from our labours. What will be the sources of obtaining our income from Rs. 15 to 150 as suggested by you ? We hope you will very kindly throw some light on these points in your address to the student gathering or in some issue of your esteemed paper."

Though I dealt with the matter in one of my addresses to students and though a definite programme has been placed before students in these pages, it is worth while reiterating, and perhaps more pointedly, the scheme adumbrated before.

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\* From the address delivered before the students of the Prem Mahavidyalaya, Brindaban.

The writers of the letter want to know what they may do after finishing their studies. I want to tell them that the grown up students, and therefore all college students, should begin village work even whilst they are studying. Here is a scheme for such part-time workers.

The students should devote the whole of their vacation to village service. To this end, instead of taking their walks along beaten paths, they should walk to the villages within easy reach of their institutions and study the condition of the village folk and befriend them. This habit will bring them in contact with the villagers who, when the students actually go to stay in their midst, will, by reason of the previous occasional contact, receive them as friends rather than as strangers to be looked upon with suspicion. During the long vacations the students will stay in the villages and offer to conduct classes for adults and to teach the rules of sanitation to the villagers and attend to the ordinary cases of illness. They will also introduce the spinning wheel amongst them and teach them the use of every spare minute. In order that this may be done students and teachers will have to revise their ideas of the uses of vacation. Often do thoughtless teachers prescribe lessons to be done during the vacation. This in my opinion is in any case a vicious habit. Vacation is just the period when students' minds should be free from the routine work and be left free for self-help and original development. The village work I have mentioned is easily the best form of recreation and light instruction. It is obviously the best preparation for dedication to exclusive village service after finishing the studies.

The scheme for full village service does not now need to be elaborately described. Whatever was done during the vacation has now to be put on a permanent footing. The villagers will also be prepared for a fuller response. The village life has to be touched at all points, the economic, hygienic, the social, and the political. The immediate solution of the economic distress is undoubtedly the wheel in the vast majority of cases. It at once adds to the income of the villagers and keeps them from mischief. The hygienic includes insanitation and disease. Here the student is expected to work with his own body and labour to dig trenches for burying excreta and other refuse and turning

them into manure, for cleaning wells and tanks, for building easy embankments, removing rubbish and generally to make the villages more habitable. The village worker has also to touch the social side and gently persuade the people to give up bad customs and bad habits, such as untouchability, infant marriage, unequal matches, drink and drug evil and many local superstitions. Lastly comes the political part. Here the worker will study the political grievances of the villagers and teach them the dignity of freedom, self-reliance and self-help in everything. This makes in my opinion complete adult education. But this does not complete the task of the village worker. He must take care and charge of the little ones and begin their instruction and carry on a night school for adults. This literary training is but part of a whole education course and only a means to the larger end described above.

I claim that the equipment for this service is a large heart and a character above suspicion. Given these two conditions every other needed qualification is bound to follow.

The last question is that of bread and butter. A labourer is worthy of his hire. The incoming President is organizing a national provincial service. The All India Spinners' Association is a growing and stable organization. It furnishes young men with character an illimitable field for service. A living wage is assured. Beyond that there is no money in it. You cannot serve both self and country. Service of self is strictly limited by that of the country and hence excludes a living beyond the means of this absolutely poor country. To serve our villagers is to establish Swaraj. Everything else is but an idle dream.

*Young India*, 26-12-1929

## THE SHORTEST WAY TO INDEPENDENCE \*

You will naturally expect me to say something about the Independence Resolution passed at the Lahore Congress, especially the Civil Disobedience part of it, and you will want to know what is going to be your share in the struggle. Well, as I have often said here, we rely not on numerical strength, but on the strength of character, and the Civil Disobedience Resolution was moved more because I had faith in a few men sacrificing themselves for the cause than in the number of men coming forward in response to the call. You know, that the Calcutta Resolution pledged us to changing the first article of the Congress Constitution and preparing for a programme of Civil Disobedience, provided Dominion Status was not forthcoming by the end of 1929. This not having been fulfilled, there was nothing for us but to carry out the pledge even at the risk of adverse criticism and misrepresentation. Events that have happened after the Resolution have added force to it. Earl Russel has given us plainly to understand that India's Dominion Status is something different from what we have always believed it to be, viz. a status allied to that of Canada, New Zealand and Australia. These, the noble Earl admits, are virtually independent. I never had anything else in mind when I talked of Dominion Status for India. What Earl Russel says is tantamount to saying that instead of being in the iron chains that India has been in for years, she may now have the choice of changing them for golden ones. And some of us seem to hug the proposal. We are so very much fear-stricken that a severance of the British connection means to us violence and chaos. Well, I want to make myself clear once more. Votary as I am of non-violence, if I was given a choice between being a helpless witness to chaos and perpetual slavery, I should unhesitatingly say that I would far rather be witness to chaos in India. I would far rather be witness to Hindus and Mussulmans doing one another to death than that I should daily witness our gilded

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\* Speech delivered on the occasion of the annual Convocation of the Gujarat Vidyapith.

slavery. To my mind, golden shackles are far worse than iron ones, for one easily feels the irksome and galling nature of the latter and is prone to forget the former. If therefore India must be in chains, I would they were of iron rather than of gold or other precious metals.

The spectre of an Afghan invasion is raised in certain quarters, the moment we talk of independence. Well I don't mind the invasion when we have severed our slavish connection with Britain. But I am an incorrigible optimist, and my faith in India winning her freedom by a bloodless revolution is unshakable. We have a helmsman like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and I do not think we are ever going to have a better young man as our President. Would that we achieved our goal whilst he has the reins of our affairs in his hands! And I think it is quite possible, if you will be true to your pledge. I would like to see the *snatakas* of this Vidyapith in the front in any campaign for Swaraj. I want you to visualize what is coming. You have a harder ordeal than going to jail. Robbers, dacoits and murderers also can go to jail, and they make themselves thoroughly at home there. But they do not serve the country by going to jail. A mere jail-going man does not help the country. What I want from you is the preparedness to offer yourselves willing and pure sacrifices in the struggle. There is a lot of violence in the air, and you will have to immolate yourselves in the flames, if there are violent outbursts when and if I am put into jail. If you are true to your pledge of truth and non-violence, you will not hide yourselves in your homes whilst violence or incendiarism is going on, nor will you be active participators in it, but you will go and rush into the conflagration with a view to extinguishing it. For surely that will be expected of you. Even the votaries of violence will expect that and nothing else from you. Vice pays a homage to virtue, and sometimes the way it chooses is to expect virtue, not to fall from its pedestal even whilst vice is rampant round about.

You will be ready of course to march to jail, but I do not think you will be called upon to go to jail. The higher and severer ordeal I have just now pictured to you awaits you. I do not know what form Civil Disobedience is to take, but I am desperately in search of an effective formula.

I am impatient to reach the goal if we can through non-violence and truth. I have infinite patience to wait, if we cannot reach the goal without the sacrifice of non-violence and truth. Both spring from my unshakable faith in the supremacy of non-violence and truth. I know, that however long the route may appear, it is in my opinion the shortest.

*Young India*, 16-1-1930

## 77

## NOT A POLICY BUT CREED \*

The Vidyapith owes its origin to the Non-co-operation Movement, and as I said some years ago, the object of the Vidyapith is the attainment of Swaraj. All those studying in national educational institutions and connected with them must do all the things that the country has to do, and must go through the same discipline, as the country has to go through for the attainment of Swaraj, so that they may be ready to offer themselves willing sacrifices when the time comes.

Ours is a movement of self-purification. There are some who think that morality has nothing to do with politics. We do not concern ourselves with the character of our leaders. The democracies of Europe and America steer clear of any notion of morality having anything to do with politics. Bad characters are often great intellects, and they can manage certain affairs well enough by the force of their intellect. The private character of some of the leading men of the House of Commons will not bear examination. We too have often carried on our political movement in the same fashion, we did not concern ourselves with the morals of the Congress delegates or leaders. But in 1920 we struck an entirely new departure and we declared that since truth and non-violence were the sole means to be employed by the Congress to reach its goal, self-purification was necessary even in political life.

Today there is not much open opposition to the idea, though there are many who secretly believe that politics should

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\* Address delivered before the National Educational Conference held under the auspices of the Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad.

have nothing to do with morality. That is why our progress is so slow and in some respects even nil. If we had acted up to our creed of 1920, we should not have taken nine years to arrive even at the present stage. If Swaraj was not meant to civilize us, and to purify and stabilize our civilization, it would be nothing worth. The very essence of our civilization is that we give a paramount place to morality in all our affairs, public or private. And as one of the functions of the Vidyapith is to civilize us, the battle of Swaraj calls for the greatest sacrifice from the national educational institutions.

I want you all to realize the implications of our creed. If you think that truth and non-violence constitute not the *creed* but the *policy* of the Congress, I do not know where I should be. But if you are convinced that they are your personal creed, I need not expatiate on them. The very fact that a person belongs to the Vidyapith should be sufficient guarantee of his truthfulness and non-violence. The first thing therefore that this National Educational Conference and those who are attending it should do is to ask themselves whether all their doings have been in consonance with that creed. If you have gone about your work, following truth and non-violence as a policy, there will come a day when you might be tempted to alter the policy. For instance my friends the Ali Brothers accepted truth and non-violence as a policy, and they never made a secret of it. They always said that they could not accept them as a creed. There are many others of their way of thinking, and they undoubtedly have their place in the service of the country, but for you, students and teachers of national educational institutions, that attitude will not suffice. You must accept both the principles as your creed and they should be part and parcel of your being. If all make of *ahimsa* a policy, and I remain the only votary of it as a creed, we can make very little progress. Let us therefore ask ourselves once again, and make sure, that we will in no circumstances harbour untruth and violence for the attainment of Swaraj. Then everything will be well.

The constructive programme has sprung out of the creed of truth and non-violence. Let us examine every item of it. Hindu-Muslim unity will be impossible so long as the Hindu cherishes violence against the Mussulman and Mussulman against the Hindu. The Congress Resolution at Lahore on the



communal question was a corollary to the creed. The Sikhs wanted bare justice, but the Resolution, as you will have noticed, has gone further, and it is meant not only for the Sikhs but for all the communities of India.

Then take the removal of untouchability. While talking of this question, some think of removing physical untouchability, some talk of the removal of the so-called untouchables' disabilities as regards the use of public wells, schools and temples. But you should go much further. You should love them even as yourselves so that the moment they see you they might feel that you are one of them. Then and then only will you be able to have their co-operation in the constructive programme.

The same is the case with prohibition. Also with the *khadi* programme. But need I talk about it here? This work is so concrete and tangible that a man who maintains a regular diary of his day's work can give a clear account of how much he has added to the national wealth. If we had approached the task in that spirit we should have made considerable headway by now. The Foreign Cloth Boycott Committee has told us what we have been able to achieve even by means of our very little work of last year. To my mind it is trifling, but if all of us had done the thing with a will and an active faith, what would have been the result? We badly need true and efficient workers. But I know that even amongst you there are quite a number of men in whom the will and therefore the capacity are both lacking. We have to shed our inertia, our want of faith, and the capacity will follow as a matter of course.

I have told you what to do. I shall tell you now something as to what not to do. Literary training, scholarly research and linguistic pursuits, study of English and Sanskrit and fine arts, had better take a back seat. All our national schools ought to be converted into factories of our national ammunition, viz., constructive work. There are millions of children in India to-day who have to go without any education, much less national education and the other big things I have mentioned. Why then can't we do without them until at any rate we have won our freedom?

The Working Committee has appealed to the country to enlist members and volunteers. Why should there be any other

organization necessary for the work ? You can all be members and volunteers and take charge of the work. Think what the students in Europe did during the Great War. Are we prepared to make the sacrifice that they made ? If deep down in us is the conviction that we may not even breathe in peace until we have freedom, we will live and move and have our being in carrying out the constructive programme.

Lastly, may I sum up in a word what is expected of you ? Even as we have to be pure, let us shed the fear of death. An Englishman has recently told us that though Gandhi may think that India will be none the worse if Englishmen left India, he has no doubt that not a rich man's property will be safe and not a virgin will be inviolate the moment his countrymen leave India. That shows what a low opinion he has of us Indians. But how can it be otherwise ? We are so fear-stricken today that we have to maintain the services of hired men for the defence of our property and our honour. The moment we shed the fear of death, we shall escape from this wretched plight. I expect every maiden studying in the Vidyapith to wake up and muster sufficient moral strength to withstand even the touch of a wicked individual. I want you all to shed the fear of death, so that when the history of freedom comes to be written, the names of the boys and girls of national schools and colleges may be mentioned therein as of those who died not doing violence but in resisting it, no matter by whom committed. The strength to kill is not essential for self-defence ; one ought to have the strength to die. When a man is fully ready to die he will not even desire to offer violence. Indeed I may put it down as a self-evident proposition that the desire to kill is in inverse proportion to the desire to die. And history is replete with instances of men who by dying with courage and compassion on their lips converted the hearts of their violent opponents.

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In reply to a question at the end of the speech, Gandhiji said :

“ If I am so keen on the students' share in the struggle, why did I not press for the boycott of schools and colleges, you ask. I say there was no atmosphere. But I hope you will

not retort that if there was no atmosphere, what can even these students do? They can do a lot. Had their devotion to their mission been intenser than it has been, they would have created an atmosphere that would have compelled the students of Government schools and colleges to leave them. What they have not been able to do hitherto, they can do even now."

*Young India*, 23-1-1930

## 78

## A DISCOURSE ON PRAYER \*

I am glad that you all want me to speak to you on the meaning of and the necessity for prayer. I believe that prayer is the very soul and essence of religion, and therefore prayer must be the very core of the life of man, for no man can live without religion. There are some who in the egotism of their reason declare that they have nothing to do with religion. But it is like a man saying that he breathes but that he has no nose. Whether by reason, or by instinct, or by superstition, man acknowledges some sort of relationship with the divine. The rankest agnostic or atheist does acknowledge the need of a moral principle, and associates something good with its observance and something bad with its non-observance. Bradlaugh, whose atheism is well known, always insisted on proclaiming his innermost conviction. He had to suffer a lot for thus speaking the truth, but he delighted in it and said that truth is its own reward. Not that he was quite insensible to the joy resulting from the observance of truth. This joy however is not at all worldly, but springs out of communion with the divine. That is why I have said that even a man who disowns religion cannot and does not live without religion.

Now I come to the next thing, viz., that prayer is the very core of man's life, as it is the most vital part of religion. Prayer is either petitional or in its wider sense is inward communion. In either case the ultimate result is the same. Even when it is petitional, the petition should be for the cleansing

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\* Addressed to boys during the Chhatra Sammelana held at Ahmedabad.

and purification of the soul, for freeing it from the layers of ignorance and darkness that envelop it. He therefore who hungers for the awakening of the divine in him must fall back on prayer. But prayer is no mere exercise of words or of the ears, it is no mere repetition of empty formula. Any amount of repetition of *Ramanama* is futile if it fails to stir the soul. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart. It must be in clear response to the spirit which hungers for it. And even as a hungry man relishes a hearty meal, a hungry soul will relish a heart-felt prayer. And I am giving you a bit of my experience and that of my companions when I say that he who has experienced the magic of prayer may do without food for days together but not a single moment without prayer. For without prayer there is no inward peace.

If that is the case, some one will say, we should be offering our prayers every minute of our lives. There is no doubt about it, but we erring mortals, who find it difficult to retire within ourselves for inward communion even for a single moment, will find it impossible to remain perpetually in communion with the divine. We therefore fix some hours when we make a serious effort to throw off the attachments of the world for a while, make a serious endeavour to remain, so to say, out of the flesh. You have heard Surdas' hymn.\* It is the passionate cry of a soul hungering for union with the divine. According to our standards he was a saint, but according to his own he was a proclaimed sinner. Spiritually he was miles ahead of us, but he felt the separation from the divine so keenly that he has uttered that anguished cry in loathing and despair.

I have talked of the necessity for prayer, and therefore I have dealt with the essence of prayer. We are born to serve our fellow-men, and we cannot properly do so unless we are wide awake. There is an eternal struggle raging in men's breast between the powers of darkness and of light, and he who has not the sheet-anchor of prayer to rely upon will be a victim to the powers of darkness. The man of prayer will

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\* Where is there a wretch  
So loathsome and wicked as I ?  
I have forsaken my Master,  
So faithless have I been.

be at peace with himself and with the whole world, the man who goes about the affairs of the world without a prayerful heart will be miserable and will make the world also miserable. Apart therefore from its bearing on man's condition after death, prayer has incalculable value for man in this world of the living. Prayer is the only means of bringing about orderliness and peace and repose in our daily acts. We inmates of the Ashram who came here in search of truth and for insistence on truth professed to believe in the efficacy of prayer, but had never up to now made it a matter of vital concern. We did not bestow on it the care that we did on other matters. I awoke from my slumbers one day and realized that I had been woefully negligent of my duty in the matter. I have therefore suggested measures of stern discipline and far from being any the worse, I hope we are the better for it. For it is so obvious. Take care of the vital thing and other things will take care of themselves. Rectify one angle of a square, and the other angles will be automatically right.

Begin therefore your day with prayer, and make it so soulful that it may remain with you until the evening. Close the day with prayer so that you may have a peaceful night free from dreams and nightmares. Do not worry about the form of prayer. Let it be any form, it should be such as can put us into communion with the divine. Only, whatever be the form, let not the spirit wander, while the words of prayer run on out of your mouth.

If what I have said has gone home to you, you will not be at peace until you have compelled your hostel superintendents to interest themselves in your prayer and to make it obligatory. Restraint self-imposed is no compulsion. A man, who chooses the path of freedom from restraint, i.e., of self-indulgence, will be a bondsman of passions, whilst the man who binds himself to rules and restraints releases himself. All things in the universe, including the sun and the moon and the stars, obey certain laws. Without the restraining influence of these laws the world would not go on for a single moment. You, whose mission in life is service of your fellowmen, will go to pieces if you do not impose on yourselves some sort of discipline, and prayer is a necessary spiritual discipline. It is discipline and

restraint that separates us from the brute. If we will be men walking with our heads erect and not walking on all fours, let us understand and put ourselves under voluntary discipline and restraint.

*Young India*, 23-1-1930

## 79

## STUDENTS AND CHARACTER

A retired Inspector of Schools (Punjab) writes :

"You might have noticed that there has been a considerable stir among the college students of our province since the last session of the Congress. A new fire seems to be burning in the young heart. Being the chief origin of his fire, and so mainly responsible for the direction it might take, I trust, you will consider the following two points connected with the matter and give your opinion :

"1. I have not the least objection to the boys' expressing their love for their motherland or yearning for Home Rule on proper occasions without transgressing the bounds of true 'non-violence'. But when they take to uttering, in season and out of season, revolutionary cries, clearly showing an aggressive or hateful spirit, I am afraid, they are positively guilty of 'violence'. Is not the cry 'Down, down with the Union Jack' open to this charge ?

"2. Hardly anything worth the name is done in our schools and colleges in the way of character-building. Will you, then, let our youth follow the impulse of the moment, sacrificing decency and discipline and not caring a straw for their various duties as students ? Should not, therefore, formation of proper character in our young people be the first care of all concerned ?"

I have already written about the cries in a previous but recent issue of *Young India*. I fully agree that 'Down with the Union Jack' smells of violence. There are several other objectionable cries that have come into vogue. One who believes in non-violence even as a policy may not utter those cries. They do no good and may do harm. A disciplined young man will not utter those cries. It is certainly opposed to Satyagraha. As for the second point raised by the writer, he has evidently failed to see that the authorities are reaping as they have sown. The system of education is responsible for the lack of character wherever it shows itself. The remedy now is not to seek my opinion or assistance, but for the teachers to make common cause

with the students and lead them to victory. The latter know the tragic history of their own nation, they know how the other nations have gained their liberty. It is impossible to restrain them from working for the freedom of their own country. If they are not properly guided in their approach to their goal, they will take the means that their unripe and unaided reason will suggest. In any event, in so far as I am concerned, I have shown them the way. If I am responsible for their enthusiasm, I am glad. I am trying too to guide it in the right direction. If they go wrong in spite of my effort, I cannot be held responsible.

No one can be more grieved than I over the bomb outrage at Amritsar through which an innocent young man, Sardar Pratapsingh, who was undoubtedly not the target of the bomb-thrower, met his death. These outrages are surely due to the lack of character to which the retired Inspector of Schools has drawn attention. The word character is perhaps not the happiest expression. Ballast is the right word. If it was the principal of the Khalsa College who was aimed at, the incident is proof of a deep-seated disease. There is no bond between the teachers and the taught. The teachers of educational institutions, whether entirely owned or aided by the Government, naturally feel it incumbent upon them, whether they have it in them or not, themselves to profess and inculcate in others loyalty to the existing Government. The students have no sense of loyalty in them. They have become impatient. Impatience has led to loss of self-control, and so their energy finds its vent through dubious channels. For me these incidents are no warning to stay my hand, but to go on with my programme and gain control over or break myself in the attempt to stem the surging tide of violence on either side.

*Young India*, 6-3-1930

## THE CHOICE BEFORE STUDENTS

It has been often said that the money spent on national education in general and the Gujarat Vidyapith in particular has been so much waste. In my opinion the Gujarat Vidyapith by its supreme sacrifice has more than justified its existence, the hopes entertained by its authors and the grants made to it by donors. For the Vidyapith has suspended its literary activities save for boys under 16 who are already under training there. The teachers and students of over 15 years of age have offered their services as volunteers and nearly forty students with the teachers are already in the field. A class for giving fifteen days' emergency training in connection with Satyagraha has been opened for the sake of those who may need such training. I congratulate the students and the teachers on the promptitude with which they have acted. I may state that twenty of these are with me on the march. They are divided into two parties, both preceding the 80 pilgrims to make preparations in advance and assisting the villagers. They are under orders not to offer civil resistance till the 80 are arrested and immediately to replace them as soon as they are arrested.

I am sure that every national educational institution will copy the noble example of the Gujarat Vidyapith which was the first to come into being in response to the call of non-co-operation in 1920. And I hope that the Government and aided institutions will also copy the example. Every revolution of modern times has found students in the forefront. This, because it is peaceful, ought not to offer less attraction to the students.

The motto of the Gujarat Vidyapith is सा विद्या या विमुक्तये । It means : That is knowledge which is designed for salvation. On the principle that the greater includes the less, national independence or material freedom is included in the spiritual. The knowledge gained in educational institutions must therefore at least teach the way and lead to such freedom.

The most superficial observer will not fail to notice that the daily routine of the Satyagraha pilgrims constitutes by itself a perfect education. It is not a company of violent rebels who



are moving about creating ravages and letting loose every passion ; it is a band of self-restrained men who have declared non-violent rebellion against organized tyranny and who seek to secure freedom from it by severe self-suffering, spreading on their march the message of freedom through non-violence and truth. No father need feel the slightest anxiety about dedicating his son or daughter to what is after all the truest education that can be conceived in the existing circumstances of the country.

Let me distinguish between the call of 1920 and the present call. The call of 1920 was for emptying Government institutions and bringing into being national ones. It was a call for preparation. Today the call is for engaging in the final conflict, i.e., for mass civil disobedience. This may or may not come. It will not come, if those who have been hitherto the loudest in their cry for liberty have no action in them. If the salt loses its savour, wherewith shall it be salted ? The students are expected to precipitate a crisis not by empty meaningless cries but by mute, dignified, unchallengeable action worthy of students. It may again be that the students have no faith in self-sacrifice, and less in non-violence. Then naturally they will not and need not come out. They may then, like the revolutionaries, (whose letter is reproduced in another column) wait and see what non-violence in action can do. It will be sportsmanlike for them either to give themselves whole-heartedly to this non-violent revolt or to remain neutral, and (if they like) critical, observers of the developing events. They will disturb and harm the movement, if they will act as they choose and without fitting in with the plan of the authors or even in defiance of them. This I know, that if civil disobedience is not developed to the fullest extent possible now, it may not be for another generation. The choice before the students is clear. Let them make it. The awakening of the past ten years has not left them unmoved. Let them take the final plunge.

*Young India*, 20-3-1930

## CONVOCATION ADDRESS AT GUJARAT VIDYAPITH

I am delighted beyond measure to know of the part you have played in the great struggle. The Bihar Vidyapith and Kashi Vidyapith also distinguished themselves in a like manner. When the history of the fight comes to be written, the contribution of our Vidyapith to the struggle will occupy a large space in it. Even the world will be proud of your glorious record. When in jail I read something about the students and the teachers of the Vidyapith, I naturally drew a comparison between Government educational institutions and the national ones, and I felt that our programme for boycott of Government educational institutions had more than justified itself. When I say this, I do not lose sight of the fact that Government schools and colleges are still full of students. There is also the more painful fact that students are so eager to go to those institutions that they do not hesitate to sign the most abject apologies and to pay fines to get admission to them. I have known circulars by heads or directors of the educational department that those who may have directly or indirectly taken part in the struggle or who may have gone to jail may not be readmitted until after the previous sanction of these heads. What is one to say of those students and of those directors of education? I wonder if you know anything about the Government's attitude with regard to the Hindu University. It would have lost its grant, but for the fearlessness and the readiness for sacrifice of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviyaji. But even if the grant had been forfeited, Malaviyaji would not have shed a single tear. He was determined that the University should rather go without the grant than that any teacher or student who served the country be penalized for his service.

Let the proud record of the Vidyapith fill the *snatakas* and *dikshitas* with pride that they are the *alumni* of no less an institution than the Gujarat Vidyapith. Let them not feel that they had joined the institution through sheer helplessness. Let them not be depressed by the thought that they are a handful. Though a handful they are like the ocean, and though the students of Government institutions resemble by their numbers the

ocean, they are as unreal as mirage. For the education that they receive and the life they are taught to live cannot give them the vital energy to win Swaraj, whereas an institution like the Vidyapith can do so in a large measure as one can see from the last year's record. Let those who have helped to maintain the Vidyapith realize that their money has been spent to noble purpose and that it has come back to them with compound interest. Let them study the Registrar's report and see if any institution in India can boast of a prouder record. I invite their attention to Kakasaheb's appeal for funds and trust that the money needed will be paid up automatically.

*Young India*, 16-4-1931

## 82

## SELF-RESPECT ABOVE ALL

I have letters from several provinces saying that the education authorities are imposing conditions on the return of students who had left their schools or colleges during the struggle. A circular of which a copy has been sent by one of the correspondents requires parents to give guarantees that their children will not take part in politics. These correspondents ask me whether these conditions are consistent with the Settlement.

Without entering into that question for the time being I have no hesitation in saying that neither students nor parents if they have any self-respect left in them should accept such conditions. What will it profit the students or the parents if they have to lose their souls to gain the questionable advantage of a public education and a certificate? There are the national institutions open to the students. If they do not like these, they can study at home. It is a gross superstition to suppose that knowledge can be obtained only by going to schools and colleges. The world produced brilliant students before schools and colleges came into being. There is nothing so ennobling or lasting as self-study. Schools and colleges make most of us mere receptacles for holding the superfluities of knowledge. Wheat is left out and mere husk is taken in. I do not wish to decry schools and colleges as such. They have their use. But we are making

altogether too much of them. They are but one of the many means of gaining knowledge.

*Young India*, 25-6-1931

## 83

## FOUL PLAY

The worst feature of the attempted assassination of Sir Ernest Hotson, the Acting Governor of the Bombay Presidency, was that the act was done by a student of the College which had invited His Excellency when as its honoured guest he was being shown round the College premises. It was as though a host was injuring his guest under his own roof. The canon recognized throughout the world is that the deadliest enemy, when he is under one's roof as guest, is entitled to protection from all harm. The act of the student was therefore essentially foul play without a single redeeming feature.

For the Acting Governor it was a providential escape, and it was fortunate for India and more so for the student world. I tender my congratulations to Sir Ernest Hotson as also to the nation.

It would be well if the believers in violence will take a lesson from this happy tragedy — happy because no one has suffered but the assailant.

Has he suffered, is he suffering, or is he deluding himself with the belief that he is a hero? Let this event be a warning to the students. After all a school or a college is a sanctuary where there should be nothing that is base or unholy. Schools and colleges are factories for the making of character. Parents send their boys and girls to them so that they may become good men and women. It would be an evil day for the nation, if every student is suspected as a would-be assassin capable of any treachery.

The Bhagatsingh worship has done and is doing incalculable harm to the country. Bhagatsingh's character about which I had heard so much from reliable sources, the intimate connection I had with the attempts that were being made to secure commutation of the death sentence carried me away and identified me with the cautious and balanced resolution passed at

Karachi. I regret to observe that the caution has been thrown to the winds. The deed itself is being worshipped as if it was worthy of emulation. The result is *goondaism* and degradation wherever this mad worship is being performed.

The Congress is a power in the land, but I warn Congressmen that it will soon lose all its charm if they betray their trust and encourage the Bhagatsingh cult whether in thought, word, or deed. If the majority do not believe in the Congress *policy* of non-violence and truth, let them have the first article altered. Let us understand the distinction between policy and creed. A policy may be changed, a creed cannot. But either is as good as the other whilst it is held. Those therefore who hold non-violence only as a policy may not, without exposing themselves to the charge of dishonourable conduct, use the Congress membership as a cover for violence. I cannot get rid of the conviction, that the greatest obstacle to our progress towards Swaraj is our want of faith in our policy. Let this fortunate failure of attempted assassination open our eyes.

"But look at the Governor's black record. Does not the doer himself say he shot because of the Sholapur deeds, because he superseded an Indian and became Acting Governor?" some hasty youths or even grown up people will argue. My answer is: We knew all this when in 1920 we settled the Congress policy of non-violence and truth. There were, within our knowledge at the time, deeds much blacker than his worst enemies have imputed to Sir Ernest Hotson. The Congress deliberately and after full debate came to the conclusion in 1920, that the answer to the vile and violent deeds of the Government was not greater violence on our part, but that it was profitable for us to answer violence with non-violence and vileness with truth. The Congress saw further, that the worst administrators were not bad inherently, but that they were a fruit of the system of which they were willing or unwilling victims. We saw too that the system corrupted even the best among ourselves. And so we evolved a policy of non-violent action that should destroy the system. Ten years' experience has shown that the policy of non-violence and truth though followed half-heartedly has answered phenomenally well, and that we are very near the harbour. The record of Sir Ernest Hotson, however bad it may be, is wholly irrelevant and can in no way extenuate, much less

excuse, the double crime of attempted assassination and treachery. The reported hostile demonstration by some students has made the ugly affair uglier still. I hope, that the students and the teachers throughout India will seriously bestir themselves, and put the educational house in order. And in my opinion it is the peremptory duty of the forthcoming meeting of the All India Congress Committee to condemn the treacherous outrage and reiterate its policy in unequivocal terms.

One word to the Government and the administrators. Retribution and repression will not do. These violent outbreaks are portents. They may judge those who are immediately guilty. But they can deal with the disease only by dealing with the cause. If they have neither the will nor the courage to do so, let them leave the rest to the nation. It has progressed past repression and retribution. It will deal with violence in its own ranks in its own way. Any Government action in excess of the demands of the common law will simply intensify the madness, and make the task of believers in non-violence more difficult than it already is.

*Young India*, 30-7-1931

## 84

## TO THE INDIAN STUDENTS IN LONDON \*

To the Indian students my appeal is to study this question in all thoroughness and if you really believe in the power of non-violence and truth, then for God's sake express these two things in your daily life — not merely in the political field — and you will find that whatever you do in this direction will help me in the struggle. It is possible that Englishmen and Englishwomen who came into close touch with you will assure the world that they have never seen students so good, so truthful, as Indian students. Don't you think that that would go a long way towards vindicating our nation? The words "self-purification" occurred in a Congress Resolution in 1920. From that moment the Congress realized that we were to purify

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From a speech delivered to the Indian students of Gower Street, London.

ourselves. We were by self-sacrifice to purify ourselves so that we would deserve liberty and so that God would also be with us. If that is the case, every Indian whose life bears testimony to the spirit of self-sacrifice helps his country, without having to do anything more. Such, in my opinion, is the strength of the means which the Congress adopted. Therefore, in the battle for freedom, every student here need do nothing more than that he should purify himself and present a character above reproach and above suspicion.

*Young India*, 29-10-1931

### TO THE STUDENTS OF ETON

You occupy a big place in England. Some of you will become prime ministers and generals in future and I am anxious to enter your hearts whilst your character is still being moulded and whilst it is easy yet to enter your hearts. I should place before you certain facts as opposed to the false history traditionally imparted to you. Among high officials I find ignorance, meaning not absence of knowledge but knowledge based on false data, and I want you to have true data before you as I think of you, not as Empire builders, but as members of a nation which will have ceased exploiting other nations and become the guardian of the peace of the world, not by force of arms but by its moral strength. Well then I tell you that there is nothing like a Hindu case, at least so far as I am concerned, for in the matter of my country's freedom I am no more a Hindu than you are. There is a Hindu case put up by the Hindu Mahasabha representatives who claim to represent the Hindu mind, but who, in my opinion, do not do so. They will have a national solution of the question, not because they are nationalists but because it suits them. I call that destructive tactics, and am pleading with them that, representing as they do the great majority, they must step out and give to the smaller communities what they want, and the atmosphere would be as clear as if by magic. What the vast mass of Hindus feel and want nobody knows; but claiming as I do to have moved

amongst them all these years, I think they do not care for these pettifogging things, they are not troubled by the question of loaves and fishes in the shape of electoral seats and administrative posts. This bugbear of communalism is confined largely to the cities which are not India but which are the blotting sheets of London and other Western cities which consciously or unconsciously prey upon villages and share with you in exploiting them by becoming the commission agents of England. This communal question is of no importance before the great question of Indian freedom of which the British ministers are studiously fighting shy. They forget that they cannot go on for long with a discontented rebellious India — true, ours is non-violent rebellion, but it is rebellion none the less. Freedom of India is superior to the disease which for the time is corroding some portions of the community, and if the constitutional question is satisfactorily solved the communal distemper will immediately vanish. The moment the alien wedge is removed the divided communities are bound to unite. There is 'therefore' no Hindu case, and if there is one it must go by the board. If you study this question it will profit you nothing and when you go into its exasperating details you will, very likely, prefer to see us drowned in the Thames.

I am telling you God's truth when I say that the communal question does not matter and should not worry you at all. But, if you will study history, study the much bigger question — How did millions of people make up their minds to adopt non-violence and how they adhered to it? Study, not man in his animal nature, man following the law of the jungle, but study man in all his glory. Those engaged in communal squabbles are like specimens in a lunatic asylum. But study men laying down their lives, without hurting any one, in the cause of their country's freedom. Study man in his glory, man following the law of his higher nature, the law of love so that when you grow to manhood you will have improved your heritage. It can be no pride to you that your nation is ruling over ours. No one chained a slave without chaining himself. And no nation kept another in subjection without herself turning into a subject nation. It is a most sinful connection, a most unnatural connection that is existing at present between England and India and I want you to bless our mission because we are naturally



entitled to our freedom which is our birthright and we are doubly entitled to it by virtue of the penance and suffering we have undergone. I want you, when you grow up, to make a unique contribution to the glory of your nation, by emancipating it from its sin of exploitation, and thus contribute to the progress of mankind.

*Young India*, 12-11-1931

## 86

## STUDENTS AND VACATION

The following is a condensed rendering of a Hindi letter received from a student in Dehra Dun :

"In the Hostel belonging to our College, hitherto the *bhangis* have taken the leavings of our dishes. But since the awakening, we have stopped this practice and we have been giving them clean *chapatis* and *dal*. The Harijans are dissatisfied with this. In the leavings they get some ghee and delicacies. The students cannot afford to set apart all these things for Harijans. Then there is this difficulty. We may adhere to the new practice we have adopted, but the Harijans will continue to receive leavings of caste dinners etc. What is now to be done? And at the same time that you answer this question, I would like you also to say how best we can use our vacation which will presently be upon us."

The difficulty that the correspondent has raised is real. The Harijans have got so used to the leavings that they not only do not mind them but look forward to them. Not to receive them they will regard as a positive deprivation. But this tragic fact just shows the degradation both of Harijans and of caste-Hindus. The students need not worry about what happens in other places. The first thing is for them to be in the right and I suggest to them that they should resolutely set apart for their sweepers a liberal amount of the food that is ordinarily cooked for them. The Dehra Dun student has raised the question of cost. I know something of the hostel life all over India. It is my conviction that the general body of students spend far more on delicacies and luxuries than they should. I know, too, that many students consider it undignified not to leave their plates with ample remains of the helpings they had. I suggest to them that to have any leavings whatsoever on their plates is undignified and a sign of disregard of the poor people. No one, least of

all a student, has the right to take on his plate more than he could comfortably eat. A student has no business to multiply the delicacies and luxuries. The student-life is meant for the cultivation of self-restraint in everything and if they will follow the method of self-restraint and adopt the clean habit of not having any leavings on their plates, they would find that they would effect a saving in their expenses, in spite of setting apart a generous portion for their sweepers from the ordinary food that may be cooked for themselves.

And then, after having done that, I should expect them to treat the Harijans as if they were their own blood relations, speak to them kindly and tell them why it is necessary for them to give up the unclean habit of eating the leavings of other people's plates and of making other reforms in their lives. As to the use of the vacation by students, if they will approach the work with zeal, they can undoubtedly do many things. I enumerate a few of them :

1. Conduct night and day schools with just a short course, well-conceived, to last for the period of the vacation.

2. Visit Harijan quarters and clean them, taking the assistance of the Harijans if they would give it.

3. Taking Harijan children for excursions, showing them sights near their villages and teaching them how to study Nature, and generally interesting them in their surroundings, giving them by the way a working knowledge of geography and history.

4. Reading to them simple stories from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*.

5. Teaching them simple *bhajans*.

6. Cleaning the Harijan boys of all the dirt that they would find about their persons and giving both the grown ups and the children simple lessons in hygiene.

7. Taking a detailed census in selected areas of the condition of Harijans.

8. Taking medical aid to the ailing Harijans.

This is but a sample of what is possible to do among the Harijans. It is a list hurriedly made, but a thoughtful student will, I have no doubt, add many other items.

I have so far confined my attention to the service of Harijans, but there is a service no less necessary to be rendered to

caste-Hindus. The students can often in the gentlest manner possible carry the message of anti-untouchability to them in spite of themselves. There is so much ignorance which can be easily dispelled by a judicious distribution of clean authentic literature. The students can make a survey of those who are for abolishing untouchability and who are against and, whilst they are making this survey, they may take note of wells, schools, ponds and temples open to Harijans and of those closed to them.

If they will do all these things in a methodical and persistent manner, they will find the results to be startling. Every student should keep a log-book in which he should enter the details of his work, and at the end of the vacation a comprehensive but brief report of the results of their labours could be prepared and sent by them to the Servants of the Untouchables Society of their province. Whether other students accept all or any of the suggestions made here, I shall expect my correspondent to give me a report of what *he* and his associates have done.

*Harijan*, 1-4-1933

## 87

## STUDENTS AND HARIJAN SERVICE \*

I know this tussle between English and Hindi is almost an eternal tussle. Whenever I have addressed student audiences, I have been surprised by the demand for English. You know, or ought to know, that I am a lover of the English language. But I do believe that the students of India, who are expected to throw in their lot with the teeming millions and to serve them, will be better qualified if they pay more attention to Hindi than to English. I do not say that you should not learn English ; learn it by all means. But, so far as I can see, it cannot be the language of the millions of Indian homes. It will be confined to thousands or tens of thousands, but it will not reach the millions. Therefore, I am delighted when the students ask me to speak in Hindi.

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\* Speech delivered at the Nagpur students' meeting.

You, both the speakers, have spoken of me in terms, which if I believed to be true of myself, I do not know where I would be. But I know my place. I am a humble servant of India, and in trying to serve India, I serve humanity at large. I discovered in my early days that the service of India is not inconsistent with the service of humanity. As I grew older in years, and I hope also in wisdom, I saw that the discovery was well made, and after nearly 50 years of public life, I am able to say today that my faith in the doctrine, that the service of one's nation is not inconsistent with the service of the world, has grown. It is a good doctrine. Its acceptance alone will ease the situation in the world and stop the mutual jealousies between nations inhabiting this globe of ours. You have said truly that, in taking up this war against untouchability, I have not confined myself to Hinduism. I have said more than once that, if untouchability is removed in its fulness from the Hindu heart, it will have far-reaching consequences, inasmuch as it touches millions of human beings. As I said last night to the great meeting in Nagpur, if untouchability is really removed from the Hindu heart, that is, if the high-caste Hindus purge themselves of this terrible taint, we shall soon discover that we are all one and not different peoples, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsis, whatever we may call ourselves. We shall feel the unity, once the barrier of untouchability is removed. As I have often said, untouchability is a hydraheaded monster, appearing in many shapes. Some of them are very subtle. If I have jealousy for any human being, that also is a species of untouchability. I do not know if my dream about the removal of untouchability will be fully realized while I am living. All those who are religiously inclined, those who believe not in formal religion but in the essence of religion, cannot but believe in the removal of a subtle type of untouchability that affects the lives of a vast mass of humanity. If Hindu hearts can be purged of this evil, our eyes of understanding will be more and more opened. It is not possible to estimate the gain to humanity when untouchability is really removed. You can now have no difficulty in understanding why I have staked my life for this one thing.

If you, the students who have assembled here, have followed me so far and understood the implications of this mission of mine, you will soon extend the help I want from you. Many

students have written to me asking what part they can take in helping this movement. It is a surprise to me that students are obliged to ask this question. The field is so vast and near you that you need not ask the question as to what you may do and what you may not. It is not a political question. It may become one, but for you and me, for the time being, it is not connected with politics. My life is governed by religion. I have said that even my politics are derived from my religion. I never lost sight of the principle that governs my life when I began dabbling in politics. As this is a humanitarian campaign, students must devote a part of their spare time, if not the whole, to the service of the thousands of Harijans. By giving me this magnificent purse you have certainly equalled the brightest records of students' meetings which I have addressed in my many peregrinations throughout the length and breadth of India. But I want much more from you. I have found that, if I get many helpers who can give their spare time, much work can be done. This work cannot be done by hired labour. With hired labour we cannot go to Harijan quarters and sweep their roads, enter their houses and wash their children. I have described in the columns of the *Harijan* what students can do. A Harijan teacher has shown what a herculean task it is for him to tackle. Even wild children are better than Harijan children. Wild children are not sunk in utter degradation, as the Harijan children are, nor do they live in such filthy surroundings. This problem cannot be tackled by hired labour. No amount of money can enable me to do this. It must be your prerogative. It is an acid test of the education received by you in schools and colleges. Your worth will not be measured by your ability to make faultless English speeches. Your worth will be measured by the service you render to the poor and not by Government posts worth Rs. 60 or Rs. 600 that you may have got. I wish you would do this work in the spirit I suggest. I have not met a single student who has said that he cannot spare one hour per day. If you write your diary from day to day, you will find that you waste many a precious hour in the 365 days of the year. If you want to turn your education to good account, you will turn your attention to this work while this hurricane campaign lasts. Erstwhile students are serving Harijans within a radius of 5 miles round about Wardha. They are doing good

silent work ; therefore, you do not know them. I invite you to see their work. It is hard but pleasurable. It will give you joy, greater than your cricket or tennis. I have repeatedly said that money will come if I have real, intelligent, honest workers. As a boy of 18 I began my education in begging. I have seen that money can be found easily if we have the right kind of workers. Money alone will never satisfy me. I would ask you to pledge yourselves to devote a definite number of spare hours to Harijan service. As you, Mr. President, have said, I am a dreamer. I am indeed a practical dreamer. My dreams are not airy nothings. I want to convert my dreams into realities as far as possible. Therefore, I must hasten to auction the gifts I have received from you.

*Harijan*, 17-11-1933

"PROVE YOUR CREDENTIALS" \*

Gandhiji's acquaintance with the students of Madras is as old as 1896 and they have ever maintained their relations with him. However much men of the older generation may hesitate to abolish this curse, the students, he said, should show their readiness to work for the reform and to serve the Harijans in a concrete manner. Gandhiji asked them to take the broom and the bucket and clean out all the dirty Harijan quarters of Madras and to serve the Harijans in a variety of ways. "If you want," he said, "to convince Hindu society that untouchability cannot be part of religion, and that it is a hideous error, you have to develop character and to show in your lives that to believe in some people being touchables and some untouchables is not religion but the reverse. If you have no character to lose, people will have no faith in you. You will have to move among the masses ; you will have to bring about a change in their hearts. The so-called orthodox do not represent the masses, nor do they represent the correct interpretation of the scriptures. They can react on the masses. But character alone will have effect on the masses. Masses will not argue. They will simply

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\* From a speech delivered before the students of Madras.

want to know who are the men who go to them. If those men have credentials the masses will listen to them ; if they have no credentials the masses will not listen." He then described to them how they could serve the Harijans, and said, " It is in the midst of these people that you have to go and bring a ray of light and hope. You will have to bend your backs and work in their midst and assure them that you have gone to them not with any mental reservation, nor with any base motives, but with the pure motive of serving them and taking the message of love and peace in their midst. If you will do that you will find a ready response from them."

*Harijan*, 29-12-1933

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### THE WIDER MESSAGE \*

It is a matter of great pleasure to me to renew acquaintance with the students and professors of this college. I have very pleasant recollections of my meeting with the students that were in the college at the time of my first visit. It was good of you to think of me while I was passing through this part of the country.

My message is exceedingly simple. It is no new truth that has dawned upon me today. I have to the best of my ability striven to live up to it for the past fifty years. And the more I have succeeded in living up to it, the greater has been my inward joy. Nor is it for the first time that I am delivering this message to India. But because of some incidents in the recent past, it comes to the people as a new thing. My message is simply this that *savarna* Hindus, who have been considering themselves superior to those whom they have called untouchables, unapproachables, invisibles, or *avarna* Hindus, should realize that this arrogation of superiority has no sanction whatsoever in the *shastras*. If I discovered that those scriptures, which are known as the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavadgita*, the *Smritis*, etc., clearly showed

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\* Full text of speech delivered before the students of the Union Christian College of Alwaye on 17-1-'34.

that they claimed divine authority for untouchability as I have described it to you, then nothing on this earth would hold me to Hinduism. I should throw it overboard as I should throw overboard a rotten apple. My reason is offended and my heart is wounded at the very thought that God Himself, who has created both *savarna* Hindus and *avarna* Hindus, should impose this bar sinister between His children. The very thought that the *Rishis* who gave the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* and who in every *mantra* that they pronounced taught the unity of God, could ever conceive of any such thing as untouchability as it is practised today in Hinduism must be repugnant to every intelligent person. But prejudice and superstitions die hard. They cloud the reason, befog the intellect and harden the heart. And so you find learned men defending this untouchability.

But you, students, should know that behind this message there lurks also a much greater message. This monster of untouchability has invaded every form of society in India ; and the idea behind this message is that there should be not only no untouchability as between Hindus and Hindus, but there should be no untouchability whatsoever between Hindus, Christians, Mussulmans, Parsis and the rest. I am convinced that, if this great change of heart can be brought about among millions of *savarna* Hindus and if their hearts can be purified, — as certainly they will be purified — we should live in India as one people trusting each other and without any mutual distrust or suspicion. It is untouchability with all its subtle forms that separates us from one another and makes life itself unlovely and difficult to live.

You can now, therefore, understand why I am drawing upon the sympathy of all Indians, to whatever faith they may belong. Indeed, I have not hesitated to ask the support of the whole world, not by way of pecuniary offering, but by their sympathy, their prayers and their study of the question with all its implications. I want their heart sympathy, which is infinitely greater than any pecuniary offering. I do not stretch out my hand before them for money, because they are not debtors to Harijans. It is for *savarna* Hindus to discharge this debt.

To conclude, this prayerful support and sympathy can only be given by non-Hindus, if they have no distrust of this movement and if they are satisfied that this is a movement of inward



purification and deeply religious. Remember that I have not idly given this message which has come straight from the heart. I have gladly taken your purse which is a spontaneous offering from you. But I have accepted it as a bond between you and myself as a token of your determination to give me the fullest support you are capable of giving. And since I am a good accountant, I shall ask an account from you and shall want to know from time to time what part you have played in this movement.

*Harijan*, 26-1-1934

## 90

### WITH THE CALCUTTA STUDENTS \*

**Q.** Believing that mass revolution is the only means to achieve freedom, do you believe it a practical proposition that the mass will and can remain absolutely non-violent in thought and action in spite of all possible provocations in the course of such revolution? It may be possible for an individual to attain that standard but do you think that it is possible for the masses to attain that standard of non-violence in action?

**A.** This is a strange question coming from you at this time of the day, for the entire course of our non-violent fight bears testimony to the fact that wherever violence has broken out, it has broken out not on the part of the masses but, if I may put it like that, on the part of the classes, that is, it was manipulated by the intellectuals. Even in violent fighting, though the individual sometimes lets himself go and forgets everything the mass of the fighting force dares not and does not. It resorts to arms only under orders and has to suspend fire in response to orders, no matter how great the individual impulse to revenge or retaliation might be. There is no *prima facie* reason why under non-violence the mass, if disciplined, should be incapable of showing the discipline which in organized warfare a fighting force normally does. Besides, a non-violent general has this special advantage: he does not require thousands of leaders to successfully carry on his fight. The non-violent message does

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\* Report of Gandhiji's conversation with the students of Calcutta on some outstanding problems of the day, on 18-7-'34.

not require so many for transmission. The example of a few true men or women if they have fully imbibed the spirit of non-violence is bound to infect the whole mass in the end. This was just what I experienced in the beginning of the movement. I found that people actually believed that in my heart of hearts I favoured violence even when I preached non-violence. That was the way they had been trained to read and interpret the utterances of the leaders. But when they realized that I meant what I said, they did observe non-violence in deed under the most trying circumstances. There has been no repetition of Chauri Chaura. As for non-violence in thought God alone is judge. But this much is certain that non-violence in action cannot be sustained unless it goes hand in hand with non-violence in thought.

Q. Do you think co-operation between the exploited and the exploiters is at all possible to attain the ideals you stand for? Do you not think that time has come when Congress should take a definite stand for the rights of the masses irrespective of the interests of the capitalists and the landlords? Do you not think that it is not possible to organize the masses effectively on nationalistic programme and workers have no need or no other alternative but to array themselves against the capitalists and landlords for the exploited tenants and labour? Do you not think that a class war is inevitable and interested classes must perish for the sake of a greater humanity?

A. I never said that there should be co-operation between the exploiter and the exploited so long as exploitation and the will to exploit persist. Only I do not believe that the capitalists and landlords are all exploiters by an inherent necessity or that there is a basic or irreconcilable antagonism between their interests and those of the masses. All exploitation is based on the co-operation, willing or forced, of the exploited. However much we may detest admitting it, the fact remains that there would be no exploitation if people refuse to obey the exploiter. But self comes in and we hug the chains that bind us. This must cease. What is needed is not the extinction of the landlords and the capitalists but transformation of the existing relationship between them and the masses into something healthier and purer. You ask 'whether the time has not come when the Congress

should stand for the rights of the masses as opposed to the interests of the capitalists and the landlords'. My reply is that ever since the Congress has come on the scene it has done nothing else whether it was dominated by the Moderates or the Extremists. From its very inception under A. O. Hume it has sought to represent the masses. That indeed was its origin, and a study of its history of nearly half a century would prove to the hilt that the Congress has been all through progressively representative of the masses.

Do I not think that time has come when Congress should take a definite stand for the rights of the masses irrespective of the interests of the capitalists and the landlords? No. We, the so-called friends of the masses, will only dig our and their graves if we took that stand. I would like to use the landlords and capitalists for the service of the masses as the late Sir Surendranath used to do. We must not sacrifice the interests of the masses to the capitalists. We must not play their game. We must trust them to the measure of their ability to surrender their gains for the service of the masses. Do you think that the so-called privileged classes are altogether devoid of nationalistic sentiments? If you think so, you will be doing grave injustice to them and disservice to the cause of the masses. Are not they too exploited by the rulers? They are not insusceptible to the higher appeal. It has been my invariable experience that a kind word uttered does go home to them. If we win their confidence and put them at their ease we will find that they are not averse to progressively sharing their riches with the masses. Moreover let us ask ourselves with the masses, have we bridged the gulf between the surging millions and us? Let us who live in glass houses not throw stones. To what extent do you share the life of the masses? I confess that with me it is still an aspiration. We ourselves have not completely shed the habits of living that we say the capitalists are notorious for. The idea of class war does not appeal to me. In India class war is not only not inevitable but it is avoidable if we have understood the message of non-violence. Those who talk about class war as being inevitable have not understood the implications of non-violence or have understood them only skin-deep.

**Q.** How can the rich help the poor without the rich being poor themselves? Richness or capitalism is a system which

tries to perpetuate the colossal difference between capital and labour in order to maintain its position and status. Is it therefore possible to effect any compromise between them without greatly injuring the interests of either ?

A. The rich can help the poor by using their riches not for selfish pleasure, but so as to subserve the interests of the poor. If they do so there will not be that unbridgeable gulf that today exists between the "haves" and the "have-nots". Class divisions there will be, but they will then be horizontal, not vertical. Let us not be obsessed with catchwords and seductive slogans imported from the West. Have we not our own distinct Eastern traditions ? Are we not capable of finding our own solution to the question of capital and labour ? What is the system of *Varnashrama* but a means of harmonizing the difference between high and low, as well as between capital and labour ? All that comes from the West on this subject is tarred with the brush of violence. I object to it because I have seen the wreckage that lies at the end of this road. The more thinking set even in the West today stand against at the abyss for which their system is heading. And I owe whatever influence I have in the West to my ceaseless endeavour to find a solution which promises an escape from the vicious circle of violence and exploitation. I have been a sympathetic student of the Western social order and I have discovered that underlying the fever that fills the souls of the West there is a restless search for truth. I value that spirit. Let us study our Eastern institutions in that spirit of scientific inquiry and we shall evolve a truer socialism and a truer communism than the world has yet dreamed of. It is surely wrong to presume that Western socialism or communism is the last word on the question of mass poverty.

Q. We want to be precise as to what you mean by *non-violence*. If by non-violence you mean absence of personal hatred, we have no objection to it. What we object to is your identifying non-violence with non-killing. Wars are waged not on personal lines but to vindicate national honour or interests. Issues have always been fought out with the maximum amount of force both moral and physical. When all can successfully use physical force for the triumph of our national ideals and when

it is the shortest cut why do you object to it? Besides the world is not even now advanced enough to appreciate moral persuasion.

A. My *ahimsa* does rule out the use of all force otherwise than moral. But it is one thing to say that physical force has been or is today being used in the world for the settlement of national issues; quite another thing to say that it should continue so to be used. We cannot afford to blindly imitate the West. In the West, if they do certain things they have antidotes for them too; we have not. Take the instance of birth control. It may seem to work well there, but if we took to the practice of birth control as it is being advocated in the West, in ten years there will be a race of eunuchs in India. Similarly, if we take to violence after the West we shall soon be bankrupt as the West is fast becoming. Only the other day, I was having a talk with an European friend. He was appalled at the prospect of wholesale exploitation of the coloured races of the world by the highly industrialized nations of the West with which civilization is today confronted. The principle of non-violence is today passing through a period of probation. The forces of the spirit are engaged in life and death grapples with brute force. Let us in this crisis not shrink from the test.

Q. What has the Congress done or what should it do in connection with the young men and women of Bengal detained without trial?

A. I have given you my solution. If we work the Congress organization non-violently and honestly we shall be able to purge it of its corruption today. It is reeking with corruption, and Bengal, I must confess to my sorrow, has been the worst sinner in this respect. I will promise you that every one of these detainees is discharged. But then our non-violence will have to be real in thought, word, and deed.

Q. We regard all those elements in our society as Harijans who in one way or other are being exploited or kept suppressed. Your Satyagraha movement is always for those who are down-trodden. Why then a separate Harijan movement?

A. It is not a separate Harijan movement that I am conducting. Its significance is world-wide.

Q. Is it yet time for the youths of India to force a social re-ordering? Should it follow or precede any further political effort towards Swaraj?

A. The two things—the social re-ordering and the fight for political Swaraj—must go hand in hand. There can be no question of precedence or division into watertight compartments here. But a new social order cannot be ‘forced’; that would be a remedy worse than the disease. I am an impatient reformer. I am all for thorough-going, radical social re-ordering; but it must be an organic growth, not a violent super-imposition.

Q. What is the utility of trying to keep a number of pseudo-nationalist Muslims within the Congress fold by allowing them illegitimate and illogical concessions which are only increasing their insatiable hunger?

A. If the Muslim nationalists are ‘pseudo-nationalists’ we too are ‘pseudo-nationalists’. Let us therefore eradicate that word from our dictionary. I do not know what an ‘illogical concession’ means, but you will never find me supporting an illegitimate concession. That is common ground between us.

Q. Is not the Congress Party responsible for the embitterment of the communal relations when it brought the Khilafat question on the Congress platform?

A. It is historically not true that the participation of the Congress in the Khilafat movement is responsible for the embitterment of the communal relations. The fact is just the other way about, and I shall always maintain that the Congress did well in standing by our Mussulman compatriots in their fight for the Khilafat.

*Amrita Bazar Patrika, 3-8-1934*

## THE STUDENTS' PART \*

"We propose doing medical work there. How shall we go about our business, Mahatmaji? Could you give us some hints?"

Gandhiji said, "I have experience of this work since my early days in South Africa. Let me then begin with a warning. By taking a little medical aid to them, you do not really help them. You must teach them sanitation and hygiene, which alone can prevent malaria. Quinine does seem to subdue malaria, but will not root it out. What is essential is the preventive treatment and the aftercare of patients. They do not know that careless diet often prepares the breeding ground for malaria germs. They eat anything and everything. But a malaria patient must eschew starch, too much protein, and live mainly on milk during convalescence. That is what we have to tell them. Teach them how to prevent disease. I will not congratulate you if you tell me that you have distributed a thousand quinine pills. Give them practical lessons in sanitation, if you can. Go there with spades and shovels, fill up stagnant pools, see to the drainage, see that their wells are properly dredged and that their tank is not contaminated. The late Principal Rudra, under whose hospitable roof I have had the privilege of living, used to tell me how Delhi had fought a successful battle against the swamps and mosquito-breeding pools around Delhi. We have now to teach the people to do what the Municipality or the Local Boards may not do, for want of funds or any other reason.

"Above all, teach them to rid their village of filth and dirt. It is the most difficult part of your work, unless you would be willing scavengers. For days you must sweep the streets and teach them to preserve health and conserve their golden manure at one and the same time. Poore's *Rural Hygiene* used to be a precious little book on this subject. You have to teach them to bury their night-soil in nine-inch deep pits and cover it up.

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\* Conversation with the Social Service League students of Prof. Winsor of the St. Stephen's College, Wazirabad.

with earth, the principle being that such earth is full of life and that the sun's rays penetrate that depth. In a little while the whole will be converted into rich manure, and you can grow the finest vegetable on this ground.

"I had better tell you about internal hygiene, too. You must study the problem of food from the point of view of health, know the foods charged with vitamins and persuade them to eat hand-husked unpolished rice, whole wheatmeal, whole sugar, greens grown on their own patch of ground, and oil, fresh-pressed in the village oil-press. Every doctor nowadays insists on prescribing a few green leaves to be eaten raw. Every peasant could grow all kinds of *bhaji* for nothing and eat it raw as part of his normal diet. It was discovered during the War that compressed and dried vegetables were harmful and that, not lime-juice, but the juice pressed out of fresh limes, was the preventive of scurvy."

"We are very thankful. Could you tell us what we should teach in a little Harijan school we are running?"

"All that I have told you. Let me assure you that education in three R's is as nothing compared to a sound grounding in the elements of hygiene and sanitation. I happened to see a number of Harijan girls learning in a Daryaganj school. As soon as I saw them, my eyes caught sight of their dirty nails, dirtier noses and dirt-accumulating little trinkets on their noses and their ears. This thing had apparently never struck the good woman who was in charge of them. Teach them first the lessons of cleanliness. Literary training by itself is not of much account. Take care of the essentials I have told you. Remember that unlettered persons have found no difficulty in ruling over large States. President Kruger could hardly sign his own name. Teach them the three R's by all means, but don't make a fetish of them."

"One more question," said the students, greedier for having got more than they had bargained for. "We have a little Cold Weather Fund. How are we to find the most deserving folk for this?"

"Well, hand it over to me or to the Harijan Sevak Sangha."

"No, we would administer it ourselves."

"Well, then, go to the slums of the city, seek out the poorest, and give them."



"To the slums?"

"Certainly. Surely not to the Viceregal quarters, for you will find the stables there warmer and cleaner and more comfortable than our hovels. No, you need not go very far. You will find people around you wanting the things which you can spare and they most need. Mirabehn, for instance, noticed that the *chowkidar* here was shivering in the cold. She gave him her blanket, as Dr. Ansari had given his shawl in England."

"But, Sir, sometimes these people pretend to be poor when they are not. How are we to find out the bona fide cases?"

"So you must be God! Pray don't think you have a monopoly of honesty."

"Concentrate on one village — Wazirabad," said Gandhiji to them, as they were leaving, "make it a model village and then ask me to come and inspect your work. Take my blessings and come to me later on for my certificate."

*Harijan*, 8-2-1935

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### HOW STUDENTS MAY HELP

In his letter to a university student who expressed his keenness to serve during his spare time, without prejudice to his studies, Gandhiji gave him these elaborate suggestions:

"You can serve the country

(1) By spinning daily even a strong yarn for the sake of *Daridranarayana*; keeping a diary of the time for which you have spun, of the quantity spun, with its weight and count, and reporting the work to me every month. Yarn should be carefully collected and held at my disposal.

(2) By daily selling some *khadi* on behalf of the local certified *bhandar*, and by keeping a record of your daily sales.

(3) By saving at least one pice per day.

(4) By holding the collection at my disposal. The implication of the adjective 'least' should be understood, namely, that if you are able to save more, you should pour more in the *Daridranarayana's* chest.

(5) By visiting Harijan quarters in company with other students ; and with your companions cleaning the quarters, befriending the children and giving them useful lessons in sanitation, hygiene etc.

Then if you can save some more time, you should learn some village industries for future service of villagers after finishing your studies. When you have been able to do these things and have still time and ambition for doing more, consistently with your studies, you can ask me. I shall send you more suggestions."

*Harijan*, 19-10-1935

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## TO THE VINAYA MANDIR STUDENTS \*

Do not forget that the aims and objects of the Vidyapith continue to be what they were. They were framed after much thought and deliberation by the organizers and the teachers. You have to keep them all in front of you. They are all contained in the prayer you have just now recited. We have all to march from untruth to truth, from darkness to light. Truth is at the very root of all our aims and vows and the plant of truth will not grow and fructify if you do not water its roots with *ahimsa*. But for you, the truth lies in cultivating true rural-mindedness. The Vidyapith was started in order to make the children of city-dwellers real servants of villages and we devised our curricula with that end in view. But you are not children of city-dwellers. You come from villages, you are children of villagers who have gone through suffering and sacrifice in the fight for freedom, and your duty towards the villages is therefore greater. May you use all that you learn, for the benefit of the villages.

*Harijan*, 29-2-1936

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\* From an address given before the students of the Vinaya Mandir of the Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad.

## FOR THE YOUNG

It is the fashion in some quarters nowadays for the young to discredit whatever may be said by old people. I am not prepared to say that there is absolutely no justification for this belief. But I warn the youth of the country against always discounting whatever old men or women may say for the mere fact that it is said by such persons. Even as wisdom often comes from the mouths of babes, so does it often come from the mouths of old people. The golden rule is to test everything in the light of reason and experience, no matter from whom it comes. I want to revert to the subject of birth control by contraceptives. It is dinned into one's ears that gratification of the sex urge is a solemn obligation like the obligation of discharging debts lawfully incurred, and that not to do so would involve the penalty of intellectual decay. This sex urge has been isolated from the desire for progeny, and it is said by the protagonists of the use of contraceptives that conception is an accident to be prevented except when the parties desire to have children. I venture to suggest that this is a most dangerous doctrine to preach anywhere ; much more so in a country like India where the middle class male population has become imbecile through abuse of the creative function. If satisfaction of the sex urge is a duty, the unnatural vice of which I wrote some time ago, and several other ways of gratification would be commendable. The reader should know that even persons of note have been known to approve of what is commonly known as sexual perversion. He may be shocked at the statement. But if it somehow or other gains the stamp of respectability, it will be the rage among boys and girls to satisfy their urge among members of their own sex. For me the use of contraceptives is not far removed from the means to which persons have hitherto resorted for the gratification of their sexual desire with the results that very few know. I know what havoc secret vice has played among school boys and school girls. The introduction of contraceptives under the name of science and the *imprimatur* of known leaders of society has intensified the

complication and made the task of reformers who work for purity of social life wellnigh impossible for the moment. I betray no confidence when I inform the reader that there are unmarried girls of impressionable age studying in schools and colleges who study birth control literature and magazines with avidity and even possess contraceptives. It is impossible to confine their use to married women. Marriage loses its sanctity when its purpose and highest use is conceived to be the satisfaction of the animal passion without contemplating the natural result of such satisfaction.

I have no doubt that those learned men and women who are carrying on propaganda with missionary zeal in favour of the use of contraceptives, are doing irreparable harm to the youth of the country under the false belief that they will be saving thereby the poor women who may be obliged to bear children against their will. Those who need to limit their children will not be easily reached by them. Our poor women have not the knowledge or the training that the women of the West have. Surely the propaganda is not being carried on on behalf of the middle class women, for they do not need the knowledge, at any rate so much as the poor classes do.

The greatest harm, however, done by the propaganda lies in its rejection of the old ideal and substitution in its place of one which, if carried out, must spell the moral and physical extinction of the race. The horror with which ancient literature has regarded the fruitless use of the vital fluid was not a superstition born of ignorance. What shall we say of a husbandman who will sow the finest seed in his possession on stony ground or of the owner of a field who will receive in his field rich with fine soil good seed under conditions that will make it impossible for it to grow? God has blessed man with seed that has the highest potency and woman with a field richer than the richest earth to be found anywhere on this globe. Surely it is criminal folly for man to allow his most precious possession to run to waste. He must guard it with a care greater than he will bestow upon the richest pearls in his possession. And so is the woman guilty of criminal folly who will receive the seed in her life-producing field with the deliberate intention of letting it run to waste. Both he and she will be judged guilty of misuse of the talents

given to them and they will be dispossessed of what they have been given. Sex urge is a fine and noble thing. There is nothing to be ashamed of in it. But it is meant only for the act of creation. Any other use of it is a sin against God and humanity. Contraceptives of a kind there were before and there will be hereafter, but the use of them was formerly regarded as sinful. It was reserved for our generation to glorify vice by calling it virtue. The greatest disservice protagonists of contraceptives are rendering to the youth of India is to fill their minds with what appears to me to be wrong ideology. Let the young men and women of India who hold her destiny in their hands beware of this false god and guard the treasure with which God has blessed them and use it, if they wish, for the purpose for which it is intended.

*Harijan*. 28-3-1936

## 95

### A YOUTH'S DIFFICULTY

A correspondent who prefers to remain anonymous seeks an answer to a question arising out of my article \* in the *Harijan* addressed to the young. Although it is a sound rule to ignore anonymous correspondence, I do sometimes make an exception when the question put is substantial as in the present case.

The letter is in Hindi and is longer than it need have been. Its purport is :

"From your writing I doubt if you understand the young mind. What has been possible for you is not possible for all young men. I happen to be married. I can restrain myself. My wife cannot. She does not want children but she does want to enjoy herself. What am I to do? Is it not my duty to satisfy her? I am not generous enough to look upon her satisfying her desire through other channels. I read from the papers that you are not averse to promoting marriages and blessing them. Surely you know or ought to know that they are not contracted with the high purpose that you have mentioned."

The correspondent is right. The fact that I bless so many marriages when they satisfy the tests that I have set as to age

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\* The preceding article "For the Young".

economy, etc., perhaps shows somewhat that I know the youth of the country to an extent that would justify my guiding them when they seek my guidance.

My correspondent's case is typical. He deserves sympathy. That the sole purpose of sexual connection is procreation is in the nature of a new discovery for me. Though I had known the rule, I had never before given it the weight it deserved. I must have till recently regarded it as a mere pious wish. I now regard it as a fundamental law of married state which is easy of observance if its paramount importance is duly recognized. My object will be fulfilled when the law is given its due place in society. To me it is a living law. We break it always and pay heavily for its breach. If my correspondent realizes its inestimable value and if he has love for her and has faith in himself, he will convert his wife to his view. Is he sincere, when he says he can restrain himself? Has the animal passion become transmuted in his case into a higher passion, say for service of fellow beings? Does he naturally refrain from doing anything to excite the passion in his wife? Let him know that Hindu science denotes eight kinds of unions which include sexual suggestions made even by signs. Is the correspondent free from these? If he is not and if he is sincerely desirous that his wife should be weaned from the sexual desire, let him surround her with the purest love, let him explain the law to her, let him explain the physical effects of union without the desire for procreation, let him tell her what the vital fluid means. Let him further engage his wife in healthy pursuits and strive to regulate her diet, exercise, etc., so as to still the passion in her. Above all, if he is a man of religion, he will try to transmit to his companion his own living faith. For I must confess that the observance of the law of continence is impossible without a living faith in God which is living Truth. It is the fashion nowadays to dismiss God from life altogether and insist on the possibility of reaching the highest kind of life without the necessity of a living faith in a living God. I must confess my inability to drive the truth of the law home to those who have no faith in and no need for a Power infinitely higher than themselves. My own experience has led me to the knowledge that fullest life is impossible without an immovable belief in a living Law in obedience to which the whole universe moves. A man without that faith is like a drop

thrown out of the ocean bound to perish. Every drop in the ocean shares its majesty and has the honour of giving us the ozone of life.

*Harijan*, 25-4-1936

## 96

## THE IDEAL VILLAGE WORKER \*

I may confess that I was sceptical about the opening of the school. We had not enough material, we had not much practical experience of village work, and I doubted whether we should be able to give the students anything helpful by way of training. I also doubted whether many students would be forthcoming and whether they would be the kind of men we need for village work. I am glad to say that my fears have been so far falsified, and that we have achieved during the brief three months more than was expected.

But today I propose to speak to you about the ideal of work and life that you have to keep in view and work towards.

You are here not for a career in the current sense of the term. Today man's worth is measured in Rs. as. ps. and a man's educational training is an article of commerce. If you have come with that measure in minds, you are doomed to disappointment. At the end of your studies you may start with an honorarium of ten rupees and end with it. You may not compare it with what a manager of a great firm or a high official gets.

We have to change the current standards. We promise you no earthly careers, in fact we want to wean you from ambition of that kind. You are expected to bring your food-bill within Rs. 6 a month. The food-bill of an I.C.S. may come to Rs. 60 a month, but that does not mean that he is or will be on that account physically or intellectually or morally superior to you. He may be for all his sumptuous living even inferior in all these respects. You have come to the institution because, I presume, you do not value your qualifications in metal. You delight in giving your service to the country for a mere pittance. A man

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\* Speech delivered before the students of the Training School for village workers at Maganwadi, Wardha.

may earn thousands of rupees on the Stock Exchange but may be thoroughly useless for our purposes. They would be unhappy in our humble surroundings and we should be unhappy in theirs. We want ideal labourers in the country's cause. They will not bother about what food they get, or what comforts they are assured by the villagers whom they serve. They will trust to God for whatever they need, and will exult in the trials and tribulations they might have to undergo. This is inevitable in our country where we have 7,00,000 villages to think of. We cannot afford to have a salaried staff of workers who have an eye to regular increments, provident funds and pensions. Faithful service of the villagers is its own satisfaction.

Some of you will be tempted to ask if this is also the standard for the villagers. Not by any means. These prospects are for us servants and not for the village-folk our masters. We have sat on their backs all these years, and we want to accept voluntary and increasing poverty in order that our masters' lot may be much better than it is today. We have to enable them to earn much more than they are earning today. That is the aim of the Village Industries Association. It cannot prosper unless it has an ever-increasing number of servants such as I have described. May you be such servants.

*Harijan*, 23-5-1936

## MARRIAGE BY PURCHASE

Some months ago the *Statesman* opened its columns to a discussion of the dowry system prevalent among many castes almost all over India, and dealt with it editorially. I used to write on the cruel customs often enough in the columns of *Young India*. The cuttings from the *Statesman* revives the cruel memories of what I used to know then. My remarks were aimed at *deti-leti* as the custom is known in Sind. Enough educated Sindhis were found who exacted large sums of money from parents who were anxious to see their daughters well married. The *Statesman* has carried on a crusade against the custom in general. There is no doubt that the custom is heartless. But so



far as I am aware it does not touch the millions. The custom is confined to the middle class who are but a drop in the ocean of Indian humanity. Whenever we talk of evil customs, we usually think of the middle class. The millions living in the villages have their customs and woes of which we have as yet but little knowledge.

This however does not mean that one may ignore the dowry evil because it is confined to a comparatively small number of the people of this country. The system has to go. Marriage must cease to be a matter of arrangement made by parents for money. The system is intimately connected with caste. So long as the choice is restricted to a few hundred young men or young women of a particular caste, the system will persist no matter what is said against it. The girls or boys or their parents will have to break the bonds of caste if the evil is to be eradicated. Then the age for marrying has also to be raised and the girls have to dare to remain spinsters, if need be, i.e., if they do not get a suitable match. All this means education of a character that will revolutionize the mentality of the youth of the nation. Unfortunately the system of education has no connection with our surroundings which therefore remain practically untouched by the education received by a microscopic minority of the boys and girls of the nation. Whilst therefore whatever can be done to abate the evil must be done, it is clear to me that this evil and many others which can be named, can only be tackled, if there is education which responds to the rapidly changing conditions of the country. How is it that so many boys and girls who have even passed through colleges are found unable or unwilling to resist the manifestly evil custom which affects their future so intimately as marriage does? Why should educated girls be found to commit suicide because they are not suited? Of what value is their education if it does not enable them to defy a custom which is wholly indefensible and repugnant to one's moral sense? The answer is clear. There is something radically wrong in the system of education that fails to arm girls and boys to fight against social or other evils. That education alone is of value which draws out the faculties of a student so as to enable him or her to solve correctly the problems of life in every department.

## AVOIDABLE MISERY

From a correspondent's long letter of wail I take the following :

"I am a schoolmaster (aged 67) with lifelong service (46 years) in the educational line born of a poor but highly respectable Kayastha family in Bengal which knew better days but is now reduced to poverty. I am blessed (?) \* with 7 daughters and two sons; the eldest son aged 20 died in October last leaving behind him his miserable and helpless parents to mourn his loss! He was a promising youth—the only hope of my life. Of my daughters five have already been given in marriage. My sixth and seventh daughters (aged 18 and 16) are yet unmarried. My younger son is a minor aged 11 years. My pay is Rs. 60/-. It hardly allows me to make the two ends meet. I have no savings. I have less than nothing, being in debt. The match of my sixth daughter has been settled. The cost of the marriage will be not less than Rs. 900/- in ornaments and dowry ( Rs. 300). I have a life policy in the Sun Life Assurance of Canada for Rs. 2,000/-. The policy was issued in 1914. The Company has agreed to give me a loan of Rs. 400/- only. It is only half the amount required. I am absolutely helpless in respect of the other half. Could you not help this poor father with the other half?"

This letter is one out of many such. The majority of letters are written in Hindi. But we know that English education has made things no better for parents of daughters. In some cases they have become worse in that the market price of possible young men who would suit an English educated daughter of an English educated father suffers an appreciable increase.

In a case like the Bengali father's the best help that can be rendered is not a loan or a gift of the required sum, but it should consist in persuading and strengthening the parent to refuse to purchase a match for his daughter but choose or let the daughter choose one who would marry her for love, not for money. This means a voluntary extension of the field of choice. There must be a breach in the double wall of caste and province. If India is one and indivisible, surely there should be no artificial divisions creating innumerable little groups which would neither interdine nor intermarry. There is no religion in this cruel

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\* The interrogation is the correspondent's.

custom. It would not do to plead that individuals cannot make the commencement and that they must wait till the whole society is ripe for the change. No reform has ever been brought about except through intrepid individuals breaking down inhuman customs or usages. And after all, what hardships can the schoolmaster suffer if he and his daughters refused to treat marriage as a marketable transaction instead of a status or a sacrament which it undoubtedly is. I would, therefore, advise my correspondent courageously to give up the idea of borrowing or begging and to save the four hundred rupees he can get on his life policy by choosing in consultation with his daughter a suitable husband no matter to what caste or province he belongs.

*Harijan*, 25-7-1936

## 99

## WHAT A GIRL NEEDS

A fair correspondent writes :

"Your article "Avoidable Misery" seems to me to be incomplete. Why should parents insist on marrying their daughters and for that reason undergo nameless difficulties? If parents were to educate their daughters as they educate their sons, so as to enable them to earn an independent living, they won't have to worry themselves over the selection of husbands for their daughters. My own experience is that when girls have had the opportunity of developing their minds fairly and are able to support themselves in a dignified manner, they have no difficulty, when they are desirous of marrying, in being suitably matched. I must not be understood to be advocating what is called higher education for girls. I know it is not possible for thousands of girls. What I plead for is a training of girls in useful knowledge and some calling that would make them fully confident about their ability to face the world and not to feel dependent upon parents or their future husbands. Indeed I know some girls who, having been deserted by their husbands are today living a dignified life with their husbands, because during the period of their desertion they had the good fortune to become self-dependent and to receive a general training. I wish you could emphasize this aspect of the question in considering the difficulties of parents having on their hands daughters of marriageable age!!"

I heartily endorse the sentiments expressed by my correspondent. Only I had to deal with the case of a parent who had

made himself miserable not because he had an incompetent daughter, but because he and perhaps even his daughter wanted to restrict themselves, in the choice of a husband, to their own little caste. The 'accomplishment' of the girl was itself a hindrance in this case. If the girl was illiterate, she could have accommodated herself to any young man. But being an accomplished girl, naturally she would need an equally 'accomplished' husband. It is our misfortune that the sordidness of exacting a price for marrying a girl is not regarded as a decided disqualification. An altogether artificial value is put upon English collegiate education. It covers a multitude of sins. If the definition of 'accomplishment' was more sensible than it has become among the classes whose educated young men exact a price for accepting marriage proposals on behalf of girls, the difficulty of selecting suitable matches for girls would be much lessened, if not entirely removed. Whilst therefore I commend the proposal of my fair correspondent to the attention of parents, I must insist on the necessity of breaking down the highly injurious caste barriers. Breaking down the barriers will widen the range of choice and thus in a great measure prevent exactions.

*Harijan*, 5-9-1936

## HEADING FOR PROMISCUITY

Thus writes a young man :

"You want everyone to become moral in order to change the world. I do not exactly know what you mean by morality — whether you confine it to matter sexual, or whether it covers the whole field of human conduct. I suspect the former, because I do not see you pointing out to your capitalist and landlord friends the great injustice and harm they are doing by making huge profits at the expense of labourers and tenants, while you are never tired of castigating young men and women for their moral lapses in sexual matters and upholding before them the virtues of celibacy. You claim to know the mind of Indian youth. I do not claim to represent anybody, but as a solitary young man I beg to challenge your claim. You do not seem to know through what environment the modern middle-class youth is passing, what with long spells of unemployment, crushing social customs and traditions, and temptations of co-education ! It is all a conflict between the

old and the new ideas, resulting usually in the defeat and misery of youth. I humbly request you to be kind and compassionate to the youth and not to judge them by your puritanic standards of morality. After all, I think every act, when it is performed with mutual consent and mutual love, is moral whether it is performed within marriage or without. Since the invention of contraceptives the sexual basis of the institution of marriage has been knocked down. It has now become an institution mainly for the protection and welfare of children. You will, perhaps, be shocked at these ideas. I would here venture to ask you not to forget your own youth when judging the present-day youth. You were an over-sexed individual given to excessive indulgence, which seems to have created in you a sort of disgust towards the sexual act and hence your asceticism and the idea of sin. Compared to you, I think many young men of today are better in this respect."

This is from a typical letter. To my knowledge the writer has gone through several changes even during the past three months that I have known him. He is still passing through a crisis. The extract quoted is from a long letter which together with many of his other writings he would gladly have me publish. But what I have quoted just represents the attitude of many a youth.

Of course my sympathies are with young men and young women. I have a vivid recollection of the days of my own youth. And it is because of my faith in the youth of the country that I am never tired of dealing with problems that face them.

For me morals, ethics, and religion are convertible terms. A moral life without reference to religion is like a house built upon sand. And religion divorced from morality is like 'sounding brass' good only for making a noise and breaking heads. Morality includes truth, *ahimsa* and continence. Every virtue that mankind has ever practised is referable to and derived from these three fundamental virtues. Non-violence and continence are again derivable from Truth, which for me is God.

Without continence a man or woman is undone. To have no control over the senses is like sailing in a rudderless ship bound to break to pieces on coming in contact with the very first rock. Hence my constant insistence on continence. My correspondent is right in saying in effect that the coming in of contraceptives has changed the ideas about sexual relations. If mutual consent makes a sexual act moral whether within marriage or without, and by parity of reasoning even between members of

the same sex, the whole basis of sexual morality is gone and nothing but 'misery and defeat' await the youth of the country. Many young men and women are to be found in India who would be glad to be free from the craving for mutual intercourse in whose grip they find themselves. This craving is stronger than the strongest intoxicant which has ever enslaved man. It is futile to hope that the use of contraceptives will be restricted to the mere regulation of progeny. There is hope for a decent life only so long as the sexual act is definitely related to the conception of precious life. This rules out of court perverted sexuality and to a lesser degree promiscuity. Divorce of the sexual act from its natural consequence must lead to hideous promiscuity and condonation, if not endorsement, of unnatural vice.

Since my own experiences are relevant to the consideration of the sex-problem, let me just warn the reader who has not read my autobiographical chapters against drawing the conclusion that my correspondent has drawn about my sins of indulgence. Whatever over-indulgence there was with me, it was strictly restricted to my wife. And I was living in a big joint family where there was hardly any privacy except for a few hours at night. I awoke to the folly of indulgence for the sake of it even when I was twenty-three years old, and decided upon total *brahmacharya* in 1899, i.e., when I was thirty years old. It is wrong to call me an ascetic. The ideals that regulate my life are presented for acceptance by mankind in general. I have arrived at them by gradual evolution. Every step was thought out, well-considered, and taken with greatest deliberation. Both my continence and non-violence were derived from personal experience and became necessary in response to the calls of public duty. The isolated life I had to lead in South Africa whether as a householder, legal practitioner, social reformer or politician, required, for the due fulfilment of these duties, the strictest regulation of sexual life and a rigid practice of non-violence and truth in human relations, whether with my own countrymen or with the Europeans. I claim to be no more than an average man with less than average ability. Nor can I claim any special merit for such non-violence or continence as I have been able to reach with laborious research. I have not the shadow of a doubt that any man or woman can achieve what I have, if he or she would

make the same effort and cultivate the same hope and faith. Work without faith is like an attempt to reach the bottom of a bottomless pit.

*Harijan*, 3-10-1936

## 101

## SEX EDUCATION

Sex complex is today steadily gaining ground in Gujarat as in the rest of India. And what is more, those who fall under its sway feel as if there is something meritorious about it. When a slave begins to take pride in his fetters and hugs them like precious ornaments, the triumph of the slave-owner is complete. But this success of Cupid, spectacular though it may be, will, I am convinced, prove to be short-lived and ignoble, and at long last end in inanition even like a scorpion whose venom is spent. But that does not mean that we can in the meantime afford to sit with folded hands. The certainty of its defeat need not, must not, lull us into a false sense of security. The conquest of lust is the highest endeavour of a man or woman's existence. Without overcoming lust man cannot hope to rule over self. And without rule over self there can be no Swaraj or *Ramaraj*. Rule of all without rule of oneself would prove to be as deceptive and disappointing as a painted toy mango, charming to look at outwardly but hollow and empty within. No worker who has not overcome lust can hope to render any genuine service to the cause of Harijans, communal unity, *khadi*, cow-protection or village reconstruction. Great causes like these cannot be served by intellectual equipment alone, they call for spiritual effort or soul-force. Soul-force comes only through God's grace, and God's grace never descends upon a man who is a slave to lust.

What place has then instruction in sexual science in our educational system, or has it any place there at all? Sexual science is of two kinds, that which is used for controlling or overcoming the sexual passion and that which is used to stimulate and feed it. Instruction in the former is as necessary a part of a child's education as the latter is harmful and dangerous and fit therefore only to be shunned. All great religions

have rightly regarded *kama* as the arch-enemy of man, anger or hatred coming only in the second place. According to the *Gita*, the latter is an offspring of the former. The *Gita* of course uses the word *kama* in its wider sense of desire. But the same holds good of the narrow sense in which it is used here. ,

This however, still leaves unanswered the question, viz., whether it is desirable to impart to young pupils a knowledge about the use and function of generative organs. It seems to me that it is necessary to impart such knowledge to a certain extent. At present they are often left to pick up such knowledge anyhow with the result that they are misled into abusive practices. We cannot properly control or conquer the sexual passion by turning a blind eye to it. I am therefore strongly in favour of teaching young boys and girls the significance and right use of their generative organs. And in my own way I have tried to impart this knowledge to young children of both sexes for whose training I was responsible.

But the sex education that I stand for must have for its object the conquest and sublimation of the sex passion. Such education should automatically serve to bring home to children the essential distinction between man and brute, to make them realize that it is man's special privilege and pride to be gifted with the faculties of head and heart both ; that he is a thinking no less than a feeling animal, as the very derivation of the word **मनुष्य** shows, and to renounce the sovereignty of reason over the blind instincts is therefore to renounce a man's estate. In man reason quickens and guides the feeling, in brute the soul lies ever dormant. To awaken the heart is to awaken the dormant soul, to awaken reason, and to inculcate discrimination between good and evil.

Who should teach this true science of sex? Clearly, he who has attained mastery over his passions. To teach astronomy and kindred sciences we have teachers who have gone through a course of training in them and are masters of their art. Even so must we have as teachers of sexual science, i.e., the science of sex control, those who have studied it and have acquired mastery over self. Even a lofty utterance, that has not the backing of sincerity and experience, will be inert and lifeless, and will utterly fail to penetrate and quicken the hearts



of men, while the speech that springs from self-realization and genuine experience is always fruitful.

Today our entire environment — our reading, our thinking, our social behaviour — is generally calculated to subserve and cater for the sex-urge. To break through its coils is no easy task. But it is a task worthy of our highest endeavour. Even if there are a handful of teachers endowed with practical experience, who accept the ideal of attaining self-control as the highest duty of man, and are fired by a genuine and undying faith in their mission, and are sleeplessly vigilant and active, their labour will light the path of the children of Gujarat, save the unwary from falling into the mire of sexuality and rescue those who might be already engulfed in it.

*Harijan*, 21-11-1936

## 102

### A STUDENT'S DIFFICULTY

A student asks :

“What should a matriculate or an undergraduate who is unfortunately father of two or three children do in order to procure a living wage, and what should he do when he is forced to marry against his will and before even the age of twenty-five?”

The simplest answer that occurs to me is that a student who does not know how to support his wife and children or who marries against his will has studied to no purpose. But that is past history for him. The perplexed student deserves a helpful answer. He does not say what is his requirement. If he does not pitch it high because he is a matriculate and will put himself on a level with the ordinary labourer, he should have no difficulty in earning a livelihood. His intelligence should help his hands and feet and enable him to do better than the labourer who has had no opportunity of developing his intelligence. This is not to say that a labourer who has never learnt English is devoid of intelligence. Unfortunately labour has never been helped to develop the mind, and those who pass through schools do have their minds opened even though under a handicap not to be found in any other part of the world. Even this mental equipment is counterbalanced by false notions of dignity inculcated during school and college days. And so students think

that they can earn their living only at the desk. The inquirer has therefore to realize the dignity of labour and seek the maintenance of himself and his family in that field.

And there is no reason why his wife should not add to the family income by utilizing her spare hours. Similarly if the children are at all able to do any work, they too should be in-spanned for productive work. The utterly false idea that intelligence can be developed only through book-reading should give place to the truth that the quickest development of the mind can be achieved by artisan's work being learnt in a scientific manner. True development of the mind commences immediately the apprentice is taught at every step why a particular manipulation of the hand or a tool is required. The problem of the unemployment of students can be solved without difficulty, if they will rank themselves among the common labourers.

As for marriage against one's will all I can say is that students should develop sufficient strength of purpose to resist any marriage that is sought to be forced on them. Students should learn the art of standing alone and resisting in every legitimate manner any attempt to force them to do anything against their will, much more so to marry against their will.

*Harijan*, 9-1-1937

## FOR STUDENTS

"With reference to your note entitled "A Student's Difficulty" appearing on page 386 of the *Harijan* dated January 9, 1937, I submit the following in all humility for your kind consideration.

"I feel you have not done justice to the student in question. The problem defies easy solution. Your reply to his question is vague and general. You ask students to shake off false notions of dignity and rank themselves among the common labourers. All this general talk does not carry one far and is certainly not worthy of a supremely practical man like you.

"Please consider the problem at greater length and offer a detailed, practical and comprehensive solution with special reference to the following case:

"I am a student of M.A. (Ancient Indian History) in the University of Lucknow. I am about 21 years of age. I have a love for learning and want to do as much of it as possible in my lifetime. I am also inspired by your ideology of life. In about a month's time when the

final M.A. Examinations come off I will have done with my education, and will have to enter life, as they say.

"Besides a wife, I have 4 brothers (all younger, one of them married), 2 sisters (both below twelve years of age), and my parents to support. There is no capital to fall back upon. The landed property is very small.

"What should I do for the education of the sisters and brothers? Then the sisters will have to be married sooner rather than later. Above all, where are the food and clothing to come from?

"I am not a lover of the so-called standard of living. I want just a healthy condition of life, besides provision for emergencies, for myself and for those who depend on me. It is more or less only a question of two healthy meals and tidy clothes.

"I want to lead an economically honest life. I don't want to earn a living by usury or by selling flesh. I have an ambition for patriotic service also. I am willing to fulfil your conditions laid down in the note referred to above to the best of my ability.

"But I do not know what to do? Where and how to begin? My education has been ruinously academic, and theoretical. I sometimes think of spinning, your pet panacea, but then I do not know how to learn it and what to do with the spun yarn, etc.

"Yes, under the circumstances in which I am placed will you suggest my adopting contraceptive methods? I may assure you I believe in self-control and *brahmacharya*. But then it will be some time before I become a *brahmachari*. I am afraid unless I adopt artificial contraceptive methods during the period before the desired consummation of full self-control, I may get children and invite economic ruination thereby. And, moreover, I feel that just now it is not quite proper in the interests of a normally healthy emotional life of my wife to impose on her a life of rigorous self-control. After all, sex has its place in the lives of normal men and women. I am not an exception to it, much less my wife who has not the equipment to read and understand your great writings on *brahmacharya* or dangers of indulgence, etc.

"I regret the letter has been a little too lengthy. But then I wanted to avoid brevity at the cost of clarity.

"You are at liberty to make what use you like of this letter."

Though this letter was received about the end of February last, I am able to deal with it only now. It raises issues of great importance, each demanding large enough space for two columns of *Harijan*. But I must be brief.

The very difficulties the student raises, though serious in their setting, are of his own making. The very mention of them must show the falsity of his position and of the educational system in our country. It turns education into a purely commercial product to be converted into money. For me education

has a much nobler purpose. Let the student count himself as one among the millions and he will discover that millions of young men and women of his age cannot fulfil the conditions which he will have his degree to do. Why should he make himself responsible for the maintenance of all the relatives he mentions? Why should the grown up ones, if of sound body, not labour for their maintenance? It is wrong to have many drones to one busy bee — though a male.

The remedy lies in his unlearning many things. He must revise his ideas of education. His sisters ought not to repeat the expensive education that he had. They can develop their intelligence through learning some handicrafts in a scientific manner. The moment they do so, they have development of the mind side by side with that of the body. And if they will learn to regard themselves as servants of humanity rather than its exploiters, they will have development of heart, i.e., the soul as well. And they will become equal earners of bread with their brother.

I might as well discuss here his sisters' marriage to which reference has been made in the letter. I do not know what is meant by marriage taking place 'sooner rather than later'. In no case need it take place before they are 20 years old. It is no use thinking so many years in advance. And if he will revise the whole scheme of life, he will have the sisters to choose their partners, and the ceremony need never cost more than five rupees each, if that. I have been present at several such ceremonies. And the husbands or their elders have been graduates in fair circumstances.

It is pathetic to find the student so helpless as not to know how and where to have spinning lessons. Let him make a diligent search in Lucknow and he will find that there are young men enough to teach him. But he need not confine himself to spinning, though it is too fast becoming a full-time occupation able to give a village-minded man or woman his or her livelihood. I hope I have said here sufficient to enable him to dot the i's and cross the t's.

And now for contraceptives. Even here, the difficulty is imaginary. He is wrong in underrating his wife's intelligence. I have no doubt whatsoever that if she is the ordinary type of

womanhood, she will readily respond to his self-restraint. Let him be true to himself and ask himself whether he has enough of it himself. All the evidence in my possession goes to show that it is man who lacks the power of self-restraint more than woman. But there is no need for belittling his own inability to exercise restraint. He must manfully face the prospect of a large family and discover the best means of supporting them. He must know that against the millions who are strangers to the use of contraceptives, there are possibly a few thousand who use them. The millions are in no dread of having to breed their children though the latter may not all be wanted. I suggest that it is cowardly to refuse to face the consequences of one's acts. Persons who use contraceptives will never learn the virtue of self-restraint. They will not need it. Self-indulgence with contraceptives may prevent the coming of children but will sap the vitality of both men and women — perhaps more of men than of women. It is unmanly to refuse battle with the devil. Let my correspondent resolve upon self-restraint as the only sure and honourable method of avoiding unwanted children. What though he and his fail in the effort a hundred times? Joy is in the battle. The result comes by the grace of God.

*Harijan*, 17-4-1937

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### STUDENTS AND STRIKES

A college student of Bangalore writes :

"I have read your article in the *Harijan* and I request you to let me know your opinion on students taking part in strikes like Andamans Day, Abattoir Day, etc."

Whilst I have pleaded for the removal of restrictions on the speech and movements of students, I am not able to support political strikes or demonstrations. Students should have the greatest freedom of expression and of opinion. They may openly sympathize with any political party they like. But in my opinion they may not have freedom of action whilst they are studying. A student cannot be an active politician and pursue his studies at the same time. It is difficult to draw hard and fast lines at the time of big national upheavals. Then they do

not strike or, if the word 'strike' can be used in such circumstances, it is a wholesale strike ; it is a suspension of studies. Thus what may appear to be an exception is not one in reality.

As a matter of fact the question such as the correspondent has raised should not arise in the Congress Provinces. For there can be no curb which the best mind of the students will not willingly accept. The majority of them are, must be, Congress-minded. They may not do anything that would embarrass the Ministries. If they struck, they would do so because the Ministers wanted them to. But I cannot conceive of Congress Ministers wanting them to strike except when the Congress is no longer in office, and when the Congress declares, may be, a non-violent active war against the Government of the day. And even then, I should think that to invite students in the first instance to suspend their studies for strikes would be tantamount to a declaration of bankruptcy. If the people in general are with the Congress for any demonstration in the nature of strikes, students will be left alone except as a last resort. During the last war the students were not the first to be called out but they were the last, so far as I recollect, and then only college students.

I would like the correspondent to read or re-read my note on a schoolmaster's letter in the *Harijan* of 18th September. He will find therein my position regarding the political liberty of students and schoolmasters.

But another correspondent writes in connection with it :

"If we allow paid State officials, teachers and others to participate in politics, it would become a hell. No Government could be carried on, if their policies are subjected to debates among Government or other State officials who have to carry them out. Your desire that national hopes, desires and ideas of patriotism should have free play is of course proper. But I fear your article is likely to be misunderstood unless you make your position quite clear."

I had thought that my position was quite clear. Where there is a national Government there is rarely any friction between it and its officials or the students. My note guards itself against all indiscipline. What the schoolmaster resents, and rightly, is espionage and suppression of free thought which has been the rule of the day hitherto. Congress Ministers themselves are of the people and from the people. They have no

secrets. They are expected to be in personal touch with every public activity including the student mind. They have at their disposal the whole of the Congress machinery which, as the interpreter of the popular will, is surely more than the law, the police and the military. Those who have not that machinery to back them are spent bullets. For those Ministers who have the Congress at their back, the law, the police and the military may be said to be a useless appendage. And the Congress is nothing if it is not an embodiment of discipline. Therefore with the Congress in power there should be voluntary, not forced, discipline everywhere.

*Harijan*, 2-10-1937

### TO TRAVANCORE STUDENTS \*

I have two letters from schoolmasters, besides others from laymen, complaining of students' rowdyism in Travancore. The Principal of C.M.S. College, Kottayam, says that the students blocked the passage of those who wanted to attend the classes. They twice turned away girls who did not listen to them. They rushed at the classes and made noises, making classes impossible.

This violent participation by students in a struggle which its authors claim to be absolutely non-violent, makes progress difficult, if not impossible. So far as I know, the leaders of the movement do not want the students, even if they wish to participate, to depart in any way from the non-violent way. Obstruction, rowdyism and the like are naked violence. I am credited with influence over students. If I have any, I would ask them to observe non-violence in thought, word and deed. If, however, the forces of violence cannot be controlled by those who are in charge of the movement, it may be a question for them whether in the interest of the movement itself it is not wise to suspend civil disobedience.

I must not presume to lay down the law from this distance, but I do feel from the evidence before me that the leaders would

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\* Statement issued by Gandhiji to the Press from Madras on 17-10-'38.

incur grave risk if they allowed students to think that their violence would help the movement or that it is secretly liked by the leaders.

*Harijan*, 22-10-1938

## STUDENTS' SHAME

There is a most pathetic letter from a college girl in the Punjab lying in my file for nearly two months. Want of time was but an excuse for shirking the answer to the girl's question. Somehow or other I was avoiding the task, though I knew the answer. Meanwhile I received another letter from a sister of great experience, and I felt that I could no longer evade the duty of dealing with the college girl's very real difficulty. Her letter is written in chaste Hindustani. I must try to do as much justice as I can to the letter, which gives me a perfect picture of her deep feeling. Here is my rendering of a portion of the letter :

"To girls and grown-up women there come times, in spite of their wish to the contrary, when they have to venture out alone, whether they are going from one place to another in the same city, or from one town to another. And when they are thus found alone, evil-minded people pester them. They use improper or even indecent language whilst they are passing by. And if fear does not check them, they do not hesitate to take further liberty. I should like to know what part non-violence can play on such occasions. The use of violence is of course there. If the girl or the woman has sufficient courage, she will use what resources she has and teach miscreants a lesson. They can at least kick up a row that would draw the attention of the people around, resulting in the miscreants being horse-whipped. But I know that the result of such treatment would be merely to postpone the agony, not a permanent cure. Where you know the people who misbehave, I feel sure that they will listen to reason, to the gesture of love and humility. But what about a fellow cycling by, using foul language on seeing a girl or a woman unaccompanied by a male companion? You have no opportunity of reasoning with him. There is no likelihood of your meeting him again. You may not even recognize him. You do not know his address. What is a poor girl or a woman to do in such cases? By way of example I want to give you my own experience of last night (26th October). I was going with a girl companion of mine on a very special errand at about 7-30 p.m. It was impossible to secure a male companion at the



time and the errand could not be put off. On the way a Sikh young man passed by on his cycle and continued to murmur something till we were within hearing distance. We knew that it was aimed at us. We felt hurt and uneasy. There was no crowd on the road. Before we had gone a few paces the cyclist returned. We recognized him at once whilst he was still at a respectful distance. He wheeled towards us, heaven knows whether he had intended to get down or merely pass by us. We felt that we were in danger. We had no faith in our physical prowess. I myself am weaker than the average girl. But in my hands I had a big book. Somehow or other courage came to me all of a sudden. I hurled the heavy book at the cycle and roared out, 'Dare you repeat your pranks?' He could with difficulty keep his balance, put on speed and fled from us. Now, if I had not flung the book at the cycle, he might have harassed us by his filthy language to the end of our journey. This was an ordinary, perhaps insignificant, occurrence, but I wish you could come to Lahore and listen to the difficulties of us unfortunate girls. You would surely discover a proper solution. First of all, tell me how, in the circumstances mentioned above, can girls apply the principle of *ahimsa* and save themselves. Secondly, what is the remedy for curing youth of the abominable habit of insulting womenfolk? You would not suggest that we should wait and suffer till a new generation, taught from childhood to be polite to their womenfolk, comes into being. The Government is either unwilling or unable to deal with this social evil. The big leaders have no time for such questions. Some, when they hear of a girl bravely, castigating ill-behaved youth, say, 'Well done. That is the way all girls should behave.' Sometimes a leader is found eloquently lecturing against such misbehaviour of students. But no one applies himself continuously to the solution of this serious problem. You will be painfully surprised to know that during *Diwali* and such other holidays newspapers come out with notices warning women from venturing outdoors even to see the illuminations. This one fact should enable you to know to what straits we are reduced in this part of the world! Neither the writers nor the readers of such warnings have any sense of shame that they should have to be issued."

Another Punjabi girl to whom I gave the letter to read supports the narrative from her own experiences of her college days and tells me that what my correspondent has related is the common experience of most girls.

The other letter from an experienced woman relates the experiences of her girl friends in Lucknow. They are molested in cinema theatres by boys sitting in the row behind them using all kinds of language which I can only call indecent. They are stated to resort even to practical jokes which have been described by my correspondent but which I must not reproduce here.

If the immediate personal relief was all that was needed, no doubt the remedy that the girl who describes herself to be physically weak adopted, i.e., of flinging her book at the cyclist, was quite correct. It is an age-long remedy. And I have said in these columns that when a person wants to become violent, physical weakness does not come in the way of its effective use, even against a physically powerful opponent. And we know that in the present age there have been invented so many methods of using physical force that even a little girl with sufficient intelligence can deal death and destruction. The fashion nowadays is growing of training girls to defend themselves in situations such as the one described by my correspondent. But she is wise enough to know that even though she was able to make effective use for the moment of the book she had in her hand as a weapon of defence, it was no remedy for the growing evil. In the cases of rude remarks, there need be no perturbation but there should be no indifference. All such cases should be published in the papers. Names of the offenders should be published when they are traced. There should be no false modesty about exposing the evil. There is nothing like public opinion for castigating public misconduct. There is no doubt that, as the correspondent says, there is great public apathy about such matters. But it is not the public alone that are to blame. They must have before them examples of rudeness. Even as stealing cannot be dealt with unless cases of thieving are published and followed up, so also is it impossible to deal with cases of rude behaviour if they are suppressed. Crime and vice generally require darkness for prowling. They disappear when light plays upon them.

But I have a fear that the modern girl loves to be Juliet to half a dozen Romeos. She loves adventure. My correspondent seems to represent the unusual type. The modern girl dresses not to protect herself from wind, rain and sun but to attract attention. She improves upon nature by painting herself and looking extraordinary. The non-violent way is not for such girls. I have often remarked in these columns that definite rules govern the development of the non-violent spirit in us. It is a strenuous effort. It marks a revolution in the way of thinking and living. If my correspondent and the girls of her way of thinking will revolutionize their life in the prescribed manner,

they will soon find that young men, who at all come in contact with them, will learn to respect them and to put on their best behaviour in their presence. But if perchance they find, as they may, that their very chastity is in danger of being violated, they must develop courage enough to die rather than yield to the brute in man. It has been suggested that a girl who is gagged or bound so as to make her powerless even for struggling cannot die as easily as I seem to think. I venture to assert that a girl who has the will to resist can burst all the bonds that may have been used to render her powerless. The resolute will gives her the strength to die.

But this heroism is possible only for those who have trained themselves for it. Those who have not a living faith in non-violence will learn the art of ordinary self-defence and protect themselves from indecent behaviour of unchivalrous youth.

The great question, however, is why should young men be devoid of elementary good manners so as to make decent girls be in perpetual fear of molestation from them? I should be sorry to discover that the majority of young men have lost all sense of chivalry. But they should, as a class, be jealous of their reputation and deal with every case of impropriety occurring among their mates. They must learn to hold the honour of every woman as dear as that of their own sisters and mothers. All the education they receive will be in vain if they do not learn good manners.

And is it not as much the concern of professors and schoolmasters to ensure gentlemanliness among their pupils as to prepare them for the subjects prescribed for the classroom?

*Harijan*, 31-12-1938

## THE MODERN GIRL

I have received a letter written on behalf of eleven girls whose names and addresses have been sent to me. I give it below with changes that make it more readable without in any way altering the meaning :

"Your comments on the letter of a lady student captioned "Students' Shame" and published in the *Harijan* of the 31st December, 1938 deserve special attention. The modern girl, it seems, has provoked you to the extent that you have disposed of her finally as one playing Juliet to half a dozen Romeos. This remark which betrays your idea about women in general is not very inspiring.

In these days when women are coming out of closed doors to help men and take an equal share of the burden of life, it is indeed strange that they are still blamed even when they are maltreated by men. It cannot be denied that instances can be cited where the fault is equally divided. There may be a few girls playing Juliets to half a dozen Romeos. But such cases presuppose the existence of half a dozen Romeos, moving about the streets in quest of a Juliet. And it cannot or should never be taken that modern girls are categorically all Juliets or modern youths all Romeos. You yourself have come in contact with quite a number of modern girls and may have been struck by their resolution, sacrifice and other sterling womanly virtues.

As for forming public opinion against such misdemeanours as pointed out by your correspondent, it is not for girls to do it, not so much out of false shame as from its ineffectiveness.

But a statement like this from one revered all over the world seems to hold a brief once more for that worn out and unbecoming saying, 'Woman is the gate of Hell'.

From the foregoing remarks, however, please do not conclude that modern girls have no respect for you. They hold you in as much respect as every young man does. To be hated or pitied is what they resent much. They are ready to mend their ways if they are really guilty. Their guilt, if any, must be conclusively proved before they are anathematized. In this respect they would neither desire to take shelter under the covering of 'ladies, please', nor would they silently stand and allow the judge to condemn them in his own way. Truth must be faced; the modern girl or 'Juliet', as you have called her, has courage enough to face it."

My correspondents do not perhaps know that I began service of India's women in South Africa more than forty years ago when perhaps none of them was born. I hold myself to be

incapable of writing anything derogatory to womanhood. My regard for the fair sex is too great to permit me to think ill of them. She is, what she has been described to be in English, the better half of mankind. And my article was written to expose students' shame, not to advertise the frailties of girls. But in giving the diagnosis of the disease, I was bound, if I was to prescribe the right remedy, to mention all the factors which induced the disease.

The modern girl has a special meaning. Therefore there was no question of my restricting the scope of my remark to some. But all the girls who receive English education are not modern girls. I know many who are not at all touched by the 'modern girl' spirit. But there are some who have become modern girls. My remark was meant to warn India's girl students against copying the modern girl and complicating a problem that has become a serious menace. For, at the time I received the letter referred to, I received also a letter from an Andhra girl student bitterly complaining of the behaviour of Andhra students which from the description given is worse than what was described by the Lahore girl. This daughter of Andhra tells me, the simple dress of her girl friends gives them no protection, but they lack the courage to expose the barbarism of the boys who are a disgrace to the institution they belong to. I commend this complaint to the authorities of the Andhra University.

The eleven girls I invite to initiate a crusade against the rude behaviour of students. God helps only those who help themselves. The girls must learn the art of protecting themselves against the ruffianly behaviour of man.

*Harijan, 4-2-1939*

## IS IT NON-VIOLENT ?

Below is an extract from a letter from a teacher in the Annamalai University :

"Some time in November last, a group of five or six students organizedly assaulted the secretary of the University Union, a fellow student. Shri Srinivasa Sastri, the Vice-chancellor, took a serious view of it and punished the leader of the group with expulsion from the University and the rest with suspension till the end of this academic year.

Some sympathizers and friends of these punished students wanted to abstain from attending classes and strike work. They consulted the other students the next day and tried to persuade them also to strike work as a mark of protest. But they could not succeed as the majority of the students felt that the punishment meted out to the six people was well deserved and so refused to join the strikers or show any sympathy for them.

The next day, about 20 per cent of the students stayed away from the classes ; the remaining 80 per cent attended the classes as usual. I may add, the strength of this University is about 800.

The student who was expelled next came inside the hostel to direct the strike. Finding the strike unsuccessful he adopted other methods in the evening, as for example, bodily lying across the four main outlets from the hostel, locking some gates of the hostel, locking up some of the young boys inside their own rooms, — especially the junior kids who could be intimidated into obedience. In this way in the afternoon, the rest of the students were prevented from coming outside the hostel gates by fifty or sixty people.

The authorities thus finding the gates closed wanted to make an opening in the fencing. But when they started pulling down the fence with the help of the servants of the University, the strikers prevented the other students from passing through the breaches to attend college. They tried removing the picketers bodily but could not succeed. The authorities finding the situation unmanageable requested the police to remove the expelled student from the hostel premises as he was the source of all the trouble, which the police did. This naturally irritated some more of the students who began to show sympathy with the strikers. The next morning the strikers found the whole fencing removed from the hostel, entered the college premises and picketed — by lying across the staircase passages and entrances to class rooms. Shri Srinivasa Sastri then closed down the University for a long vacation of 1½ months from November 29th to January 16th. He gave a statement to the Press appealing to the students to come back from home in a chastened and happier mood for study.

But the college reopened with renewed activities on the part of the strikers who had extra advice during the vacation from..... They went to Rajaji, it appears, but he asked them to obey the Vice-chancellor and declined to interfere. He sent two telegrams also to the strikers, through the Vice-chancellor, appealing to them to give up the strike and attend college classes and settle down to quiet work. Though, on the majority of good students these telegrams had a good effect, the strikers remained adamant.

The picketing is still going on. It has almost become chronic. The strikers are about 35 to 45 in number. They have got about 50 sympathizers who dare not come into the open and strike with them, but from within they create trouble. Every day they come in a body and lie down in front of entrances to classes, and on the stairs leading to classes on the first floor and thus prevent the students from entering the classes. But the teachers shift from place to place and hold classes before the picketers can reach there. Each hour the venue of the classes is changed. Sometimes classes are held in the open air, so that the picketers cannot block the entrance by lying down. On those occasions the strikers disturb the classes by shouting and sometimes by haranguing the students who have assembled to hear lectures of their respective class teachers.

Yesterday there was a new development. The strikers came into the classes, rolled on the floor and uttered shouts. Some strikers, I heard, began writing on blackboards before the teacher could come. If any teachers are known to be meek, some of the strikers try to intimidate them also. In fact they threatened the Vice-chancellor with 'violence and bloodshed', if he did not accede to their demands.

One other important point I ought to tell you is that the strikers get help from some outsiders, employ *goondas* to enter the University premises and disturb the work there. As a matter of fact I saw many such *goondas*—and people who are not students—wandering about in the verandahs, and near the class-rooms also. Apart from it the students use abusive language against the Vice-chancellor.

Now the point I am driving at is this: We have all been feeling, i.e., several teachers and a large number of students, that these activities are not truthful and non-violent and so are against the spirit of Satyagraha.

I learn reliably that some of the striker students persist in calling this non-violent. They say that if Mahatmaji declare this to be violent they will stop these activities."

The letter is dated 17th February and addressed to Kakasaheb Kalelkar whom the teacher knows intimately. The portion not printed by me seeks Kakasaheb's opinion whether the conduct of the students can be called non-violent and deplores the attitude of unruliness which has become rampant among so many students in India.

The letter gives the names of those who are inciting the strikers to persist in their behaviour. On the publication of my opinion on the strike, someone, presumably a student, sent me an angry telegram saying that the behaviour of the strikers is perfectly non-violent. Assuming the correctness of the version reproduced by me, I have no hesitation in saying that the attitude of the students is essentially violent. Surely, if someone blocks the passage to my house, his action is violence just as much as if he pushed me bodily from the doorstep.

If students have a real grievance against their teachers, they may have the right to strike and even picket their school or college but only to the extent of politely warning the unwary from attending their classes. They could do so by speaking or by distributing leaflets. But they may not obstruct the passage or use any coercion against those who do not want to strike.

And the students have struck against whom ? Shri Srinivasa Sastriar is one of India's best scholars. He had become renowned as a teacher before many of the students were born or were in their teens. Any university in the world will be proud to have him as Vice-chancellor as well for the greatness of his learning as for the nobility of his character.

If the writer of the letter to Kakasaheb has given an accurate account of the happenings in the Annamalai University, Sastriar's handling of the situation seems to me to have been quite correct. In my opinion the strikers are harming themselves by their conduct. I belong to the old school which believed in reverence for teachers. I can understand not going to a school for whose teachers I have no regard. But I cannot understand disrespect towards or vilification of my teachers. Such conduct is ungentlemanly, and all ungentlemanliness is violence.



## AMONG HARIJAN BOYS \*

"I congratulate myself," said Gandhiji, "that I am here to give away the certificates to the first batch of students leaving the school which was established in 1936. But the fact that they have won the certificates throws a good deal of responsibility on their as well as my shoulders—mine because my blessings, which are being given from the depth of my heart, must bear fruit. That only time can show. Shri Viyogi Hari will have to maintain contact with the boys who are going out today. It will have to be a contact as close as that between parents and children. The parents' interest in the children is all the more when the children go away from them for work in distant places. He will keep me informed of your progress.

"The responsibility will be no less yours to be worthy of the training you have received, of the clean life you have lived, and of the uplifting contacts you have formed here. My blessings will be of no use if you will not fulfil your trust. Your responsibility is enhanced by the fact that you will go out as representatives of Harijans and you will have to reflect in your life there the life you have lived here. Your contribution to the destruction of untouchability will be in proportion to the cleanliness and purity of the life you live and the service you will render to your community. Hinduism, you will remember, cannot live if untouchability remains, and you will have to make yourselves volunteer workers in the sacred cause.

"Shri Viyogi Hari said that it was difficult to make the tailoring department self-supporting. There must then be something wrong with the training given. Every craft is being taught, or ought to be taught, on a self-supporting basis. You, students, ought to ascertain from time to time from Viyogiji whether the work you turn out is paying enough and if not, wherein lies the defect. Only then will you be able to make your school an ideal industrial school. If you pay for your training through your work, you will never have difficulty in after-life in earning your bread.

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\* From an address given before the students of the Harijan Industrial School, New Delhi.

"Those who leave the institution ought to get work wherever they go, and if those who are fully qualified fail to get work, it is the duty of the industrial school to find work for them. Let no one think that they get here an inferior kind of training fit only for the poorest people. The training they receive is in my opinion superior to what the most well-to-do boys receive elsewhere. It will depend on you to show by the work you do that it is in no way inferior to similar training imparted by any other institution. It is my firm opinion that useful as the other activities of the Harijan Sevak Sangh are, its educational activities in a Home like this is the most useful. For if this institution throws up even a few boys of sterling worth who would give themselves to the service of the Harijans, they will solve the problem of untouchability in a most substantial manner.

"May you live straight and clean lives, and thus be the representatives not only of the Harijans but of the millions of non-Harijans who want to serve the Harijans."

*Harijan*, 5-8-1939

## STUDENTS AND THE COMING FIGHT

Q. Although a college student I am a four anna member of the Congress. You say I may not take any active part in the coming struggle whilst I am studying. What part do you expect the student world to take in the freedom movement?

A. There is a confusion of thought in the question. The fight is going on now and it will continue till the nation has come to her birthright. Civil disobedience is one of the many methods of fighting. So far as I can judge today, I have no intention of calling out students. Millions will not take part in civil disobedience. But millions will help in a variety of ways.

1. Students can, by learning the art of voluntary discipline, fit themselves for leadership in the various branches of the nation's work.

2. They can aim not at finding lucrative careers but at becoming national servants after completing their studies.

3. They can set apart for the national coffers a certain sum from their allowances.

4. They can promote intercommunal, interprovincial, and intercaste harmony among themselves and fraternize with Harijans by abolishing the least trace of untouchability from their lives.

5. They can spin regularly and use certified *khadi* to the exclusion of all other cloth as well as hawk *khadi*.

6. They can set apart a certain time every week, if not every day, for service in a village or villages nearest to their institutions and, during the vacation, devote a certain time daily for national service.

The time may of course come when it may be necessary to call out the students as I did before. Though the contingency is remote, it will never come, if I have any say in the matter, unless the students have qualified themselves previously in the manner above described.

*Harijan*, 17-2-1940

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### A TICKLISH QUESTION

Q. I am a Hindu student. I have been great friends with a Muslim, but we have fallen out over the question of idol worship. I find solace in the idol worship, but I cannot give an answer to my Muslim friend in terms of what may be called convincing. Will you say something on idol worship in the *Harijan*?

A. My sympathies are both with you and your Muslim friend. I suggest your reading my writings on the question in *Young India* and, if you feel at all satisfied, let your Muslim friend read them too. If your friend has real love for you, he will conquer his prejudice against idol worship. A friendship which exacts oneness of opinion and conduct is not worth much. Friends have to tolerate one another's ways of life and thought even though they may be different, except where the difference is fundamental. May be your friend has come to think that it is sinful to associate with you as you are an idolater. Idolatry

is bad, not so idol worship. An idolater makes a fetish of his idol. An idol worshipper sees God even in a stone and therefore takes the help of an idol to establish his union with God. Every Hindu child knows that the stone in the famous temple in Banaras is not Kashi Vishwanath. But he believes that the Lord of the Universe does reside specially in that stone. This play of the imagination is permissible and healthy. Every edition of the *Gita* on a book-stall has not that sanctity which I ascribe to my own copy. Logic tells me there is no more sanctity in my copy than in any another. The sanctity is in my imagination. But that imagination brings about marvellous concrete results. It changes men's lives. I am of opinion that whether we admit it or not, we are all idol worshippers or idolaters, if the distinction I have drawn is not allowed. A book, a building, a picture, a carving are surely all images in which God does reside, but they are not God. He who says they are errs.

*Harijan*, 9-3-1940

## 112

## EDUCATED UNEMPLOYMENT

**Q.** The problem of unemployment among the educated is assuming alarming proportions. You of course condemn higher education, but those of us who have been to the University realize that we do develop mentally there. Why should you discourage anyone from learning? Would not a better solution be for unemployed graduates to go in for mass education and let the villagers give them food in return? And could not Provincial Governments come to their aid and help them with some money and clothing?

**A.** I am not against higher education. But I am against only a few lakhs of boys and girls receiving it at the expense of the poor tax-payer. Moreover, I am against the type of higher education that is given. It is much cry and little wool. The whole system of higher education and for that matter all education needs radical overhauling. But your difficulty is about unemployment. In this you have my sympathy and co-operation. On the principle that every labourer is worthy of his hire, every graduate who goes to a village to serve it is

entitled to be housed, fed and clothed by the villagers. And they do it too. But they will not when the graduate lives like *saheb* and costs them ten times as much as they can afford. His life must accord as nearly as possible with that of the villagers and his mission must find appreciation among them.

*Harijan*, 9-3-1940

## 113

### A DILEMMA

*Q.* My father is an employee in the S. I. Railway. He has four children, all younger than I. He wants me to take an apprenticeship course. If I take part in the coming civil disobedience struggle, he may be dismissed and the family will starve. He says I can serve the nation by doing my share of constructive work. What is your advice?

*A.* Your father is right. If you are the only bread-winner, you cannot leave the family to its fate for the sake of taking part in civil disobedience. You will certainly serve the nation quite as effectively as civil resisters if you zealously carry out the constructive programme.

*Harijan*, 6-4-1940

## 114

### HOW TO USE VACATION

*Q.* What can students do during vacation? They do not want to study and would get tired of constant spinning.

*A.* If they get tired of spinning, it shows that they have not understood its life-giving property and its intrinsic fascination. What is the difficulty in understanding that every yard spun adds to the national wealth? A yard of yarn is not much, but as it is the easiest form of labour it can be easily multiplied. Thus the potential value of spinning is very great. Students are expected to understand the mechanism of the *charkha* and keep it in good order. Those who do so, will find a peculiar fascination in spinning. I refuse, therefore, to suggest any other

occupation. But of course spinning may give place to more pressing work — I mean more pressing in point of time. Their help may be required in putting the neighbouring villages in a good sanitary condition and in attending to the sick or in educating Harijan children, etc.

*Harijan*, 1-6-1940

## STUDENTS' DIFFICULTY

Q. We are students in Poona. We are taking part in the drive against illiteracy. Now in the parts we are visiting there are drunkards who threaten us if we go to teach people. Those among whom we are working are Harijans. They get frightened. Some suggest that proceedings should be taken against these drunkards. Some suggest we should try your method of wooing them. Will you advise?

A. You are doing good work. Literacy drive and many such things are by-products of the big reform, perhaps the biggest of modern times. As to the drunkards they must be treated as diseased persons entitled to our sympathy and service. You should, therefore, reason with them when they are sober, and take even the beating, if any, with good grace. I do not rule out court proceedings, but they will be evidence of want of enough *ahimsa* in you. But you cannot go against your nature. If you do not evoke response from them to your wooing, your work must not be held up because of the obstruction referred to by you. Recourse to legal proceedings is then indicated. But you must make all honest effort before you go to law.

*Harijan*, 8-6-1940

## STUDENTS AND SATYAGRAHA

*Q.* Why do you object to students participating in the Satyagraha campaign, if it is launched? And why must they leave school or college for good, in case they are permitted? Surely students in England are not silently looking on when their country is engaged in a war.

*A.* To withdraw students from schools and colleges is to encourage them in a programme of non-co-operation. It is not on our programme today. If I were in charge of the Satyagraha campaign, I should neither invite nor encourage the students to leave their schools and colleges. We have seen by experience that the students have not yet got over their passion for Government schools and colleges. That these institutions have lost their glamour is a gain, but I do not set much store by it. And if the institutions are to continue, withdrawal of students for Satyagraha will do them no good and will be of little help to the cause. Such withdrawal will not be non-violent. I have said that those who intend to join the campaign should leave their schools or colleges for good and resolve to devote themselves to the nation's service even after the struggle is over. There is no comparison between the students here and those in England. There the whole nation is involved in the war. The institutions have been closed down by the managers. Here, on the contrary, students leaving their schools and colleges would do so in spite of the heads of those institutions.

*Harijan*, 15-9-1940

## A CHRISTIAN STUDENT'S COMPLAINT

An Indian Christian student from a Missionary college in Bengal writes :

"Missionary colleges are meant to be centres of preaching and conversion to Christianity. The Missionaries talk of the Bible, Christ and Christianity, but when any matter of national importance to India arises they are surprisingly reactionary. We have annual socials in our college. On the evening of 7th September one such was held, and the opening item in our programme was the singing of *Bande Mataram* by a group of boarders. The Principal objected on the ground that it was difficult for Europeans to stand for ten minutes in honour of an Indian national song and that, if the practice of singing *Bande Mataram* was allowed, it would mean official recognition of it by them as a national song which they do not care to give. No compromise was possible in spite of every argument on the part of the students. The students have called a strike. In the same way the Congress should also resort to Satyagraha and non-co-operation, for imperialist Britain will never understand our point of view."

Of late I have written a great deal against strikes by students. I do not know the name of the college. Had I known it, I would have sought verification from the authorities. Therefore I base my opinion on the assumption that the facts are correctly stated by my correspondent. If they are, I am happy to be able to say that this strike was thoroughly justified. And I hope that it was wholly spontaneous and successful. Whether the song is in fact national or not is not for the Missionaries concerned to determine. For them it is surely enough to know that their students recognize the song as national. Professors and teachers, if they are to be popular with their pupils, have to identify themselves with their activities and aspirations so long as they are not unhealthy or immoral.

*Harijan*, 6-10-1940



## STUDENTS AND POLITICAL STRIKES \*

(1)

I have received several letters from students in Madras and the United Provinces regarding their demonstrations over Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's arrest and imprisonment and the threatened reprisals by the Governments concerned. The students now desire to have a strike of protest and ask for my advice.

When the whole world hangs its head in shame over the imprisonment of one of India's noblest and bravest sons, it is no wonder that the student world in India is shaken to its roots. Whilst, therefore, my sympathy is wholly with them, I must adhere to the view that the students were wrong in their walk-out as a mark of their resentment over Jawaharlal Nehru's imprisonment. The Governments of the two provinces are more than wrong in their threats of reprisals.

The students will, however, do well not to resort to the contemplated strike of protest. If they desire my advice they should send an authorized representative, who is in full possession of the facts of which I have but a very superficial knowledge. I shall gladly give guidance for what it may be worth. They know how much I would value their whole-hearted co-operation in the struggle I am endeavouring to lead. In any case, they will spoil their own and damage the national cause by ill-conceived and hasty action.

(2)

My attention has been drawn to some paragraphs appearing in the Press, purporting to give my opinion about the questions agitating the students. I have not read all that has appeared in the Press, if only because I want to conserve my energy on which, of late, I have been obliged to put an unduly heavy strain. My opinion is firm. No provocation should be allowed to

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\* Two statements issued to the Press, deprecating political strikes by students, in Nov. 1940.

justify political strikes by students, unless they have made up their minds once for all to abandon their college or school studies. Unlike, as in free countries, our educational institutions are controlled by the rulers, from whom the nation is struggling to free itself. Self-suppression is, therefore, the price the students must pay for receiving the education evolved and controlled by the rulers. They cannot have the cake and eat it too. If they want the education which the schools and colleges impart, as evidently they do, they have to conform to the rules and regulations laid down for these institutions. Therefore, unless the heads of the institutions consent, there should be no political strikes. But I have suggested a way out. Students have ample time after school and college hours of which they are their own masters. They can hold meetings, express their sympathy with the national cause in an orderly manner, and they can have processions, too, if they like. Those who wish to take part in Civil Disobedience and accept my leadership can do so after suspending their studies for the time being, by conforming to the conditions laid down for offering Civil Disobedience and after receiving my permission.

Letters being received by me from individual students show that they have little faith in my leadership, for they have no faith in the constructive programme of which the centre and most visible part is *khadi*. They do not believe in spinning, and, if my correspondents are to be accepted as reliable witnesses, their belief in non-violence is also of a doubtful quantity.

Students can play an effective part in the national struggle, if they will whole-heartedly come under discipline. But if they will act on their own and fritter away their energy in making ineffective demonstrations, they will hinder the national cause. I am glad to be able to testify that Congressmen are showing a measure of discipline which is an agreeable surprise to me. For, I was not prepared for it. Let it not be said of the student world that at the eleventh hour, they were found wanting. Let them remember that I am asking for greater steadfastness, greater courage, and greater self-sacrifice than can be devoted by undisciplined and thoughtless demonstrations. The students should also realize that the number of civil resisters will always be confined to a few, compared with the 350 millions forming the nation. There is no limit to the number who should

take part in working the constructive programme. I regard this the most useful and effective part of the movement for independence, without which civil resistance will cease to be civil and, therefore, utterly valueless. \*

## 119

## STUDENTS AND POWER POLITICS †

I am fighting the country's struggle. The country includes students as much as the other parts of the body politic. I have, however, a special claim upon the students and they upon me, for I regard myself still as a student, and also because from the very commencement of my return to India I have been in close touch with them and many of them have served the cause of Satyagraha.

Therefore, even if the whole of the student world were to repudiate me for causes, which in their very nature must be temporary, I am not going to be deterred from tendering my advice for fear of rejection.

Students cannot afford to have party politics. They may hear all parties, as they read all sorts of books, but their business is to assimilate the truth of all and reject the balance. That is the only worthy attitude that they can take.

Power politics should be unknown to the student world. Immediately they dabble in that class of work, they cease to be students and will, therefore, fail to serve country in its crisis.

And you, as General Secretary, would be ill-serving the cause of the students if you take part in power politics.

All communists are not bad, as all Congressmen are not angels. I have, therefore, no prejudice against communists, as such.

Their philosophy, as they have declared it to me, I cannot subscribe to. I have great regard for Dr. Ashraf's abilities. I have never questioned his love of his country, but I am positive

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\* From *To The Students*. — Ed. Anand T. Hingorani.

† From a letter to the General Secretary of the All India Students' Federation in reply to the latter's communication to him about the split in the Federation. Issued to the Press on 26th January, 1941.

he will one day be sorry for the wrong guidance he is giving to the student world.

But inasmuch as he is enamoured of his views, as I am of mine, and we are equally obstinate, I despair of convincing him of his error and, therefore, never enter into argument with him. And he returns the compliment by avoiding me.

But let the students remember that at the present moment I am fighting the country's cause. I am not an inexperienced general, but a seasoned soldier of 50 years' standing.

Let them, therefore, think 50 times before rejecting my advice which is that they must not dabble in strikes without reference to me.

I have never said or suggested that they may never resort to strikes. They should not forget my recent advice to the Christ Church College students.\* I do not repent of that advice. Let them take full benefit of it.†

## 120

### KHADI STUDENTS

I have been asked to write something in regard to *khadi* students of today. I have already written a little, but it cannot be too clearly stated nor enough stressed that knowledge of spinning, carding and the other processes alone does not constitute true *khadi* learning. That may be termed its mechanics. To understand the inner meaning of *khadi* one has to know why it has to be turned out by hand and not by power machinery. Why should innumerable hands be employed when a single person can manipulate an engine which can produce the same amount of cloth in far less time? If *khadi* has to be produced by hand, why not by the *takli* only? And if the *takli*, why not the bamboo *takli*? And if we could get the necessary work by suspending yarn by means of a stone, why even a *takli*? Such questions are perfectly natural. To find proper answers to all such is a necessary part of *khadi* research. I do not want to

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\* See Chapter 117.

† From *To The Students*. — Ed. Anand T. Hingorani.

discuss these questions here. All I want to say is that true knowledge of *khadi* goes far beyond the mechanical processes, and requires patient research. We have not the means of imparting such knowledge today. Therefore, *khadi* instructors have to improve their knowledge even whilst they are teaching. And students have to acquire knowledge through their own diligence. In olden times when no scientific knowledge was available, students used to be their own teachers and became first rate scholars and experts. We are more or less in the same position today.

*Harijan*, 1-3-1942

## 121

### VACATION WORK

A Poona correspondent writes :

"Students are now going on long leave for their summer vacation. Most of them will leave the cities and go to their native places. Looking to the urgent exigencies in the country due to the war situation, and its consequent responsibilities on the people of India, will it not be useful if a message is sent to the student world reminding them of their responsibility and duty at this critical juncture ? May I therefore request you to kindly issue an appeal at the earliest to the students calling them for some action during the vacation and after ? My humble suggestions are as follows :

1. Reading out the news to the villagers about the War and the Indian political situation and special articles from the *Harijan*.
2. Explaining to them the present emergency and possible events.
3. Organizing *Nagarika Samrakshana Dals*.
4. Propagating and organizing the idea of self-sufficiency in villages, so far as food and clothing is concerned.
5. A persistent campaign against untouchability. It is possible that the students, some of whom are under the fanatic influence of communal organizations, might harm rather than help the cause in view. But we have to take the chances with the students as they are, and hence I have deliberately dropped, out of the above list, items of communal unity and Congress ideology and mentioned only such items as would give least scope for either communal or ideological differences."

I have no difficulty in endorsing the suggestions made by the correspondent.

Self-sufficiency is a big word. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has adopted that and self-reliance as slogans in his U.P. speeches. They should prove catching at this juncture. Villages will be swept away, if they are not self-sufficient as to their primary wants and self-reliant as to their protection against internal disruption by dissensions and disease and external danger from thieves and dacoits. Self-sufficiency, therefore, means all the cotton processes and growing of seasonal food crops and fodder for cattle. Unless this is done there will be starvation. And self-reliance means corporate organization ensuring adjustment of internal differences through arbitration by the wise men of villages and cleanliness by corporate attention to sanitation and common diseases. No mere individual effort is going to suffice. And above all villagers must be taught to feel their own strength by combined effort to make their villages proof against thieves and dacoits. This is best done by corporate non-violence. But if the way to non-violence does not seem clear to workers, they will not hesitate to organize corporate defence through violence. I am not having in mind Congressmen who have adopted non-violence as their final creed and so have no choice in the matter.

Thus the students, if they will, can have a strenuous vacation. Who knows that the vacation may not prove even indefinite? But if it is not, two months are good enough time for laying down a good foundation for self-sufficiency and self-reliance.

My correspondent is timid. There is no cause to fear communal strife. Students who take up village reorganization cannot afford to be communal. Communalism is an urban product fated to flourish only on urban soil. In rural areas the people are too poor and too interdependent to find time for communal quarrels. Be that as it may, student workers are assumed, for this note, to be free from the virus.

*Harijan*, 5-4-1942

## FLAGS AND SCHOOLS

I have two typical letters about flags in schools and colleges. Some boys hoist the Congress flag, therefore others hoist the League flag. Both are wrong. My correspondents report that the mischief commenced by the hoisting of the Congress flag. Probably nothing would have happened for the time being, if both the flags had been tolerated. The right thing was and is that boys must not take the initiative in such cases. The buildings belong to the authorities and they must decide whether or not to fly, which, if any, flag over their buildings. If boys take the law into their own hands, the result must be chaos and confusion plus breaking of heads. This would be sheer vulgarity and doing no good to anybody. Schools and colleges should be institutions for healing communal breaches, not for promoting differences. If boys and girls do not learn discipline in their school days, money and time spent on their education is so much national loss. The one bright thing that emerges from the Lahore episode is that Maulanasaheb Abul Kalam Azad promptly intervened and ruled that the boys who had hoisted the Congress flag were in the wrong.

*Harijan*, 17-2-1946

## WHAT AFTER FINISHING STUDIES ?

**Q.** A student has seriously posed this question : "What am I to do after finishing my studies ?"

**A.** We are today a subject race and our educational system has been devised to serve the interests of our rulers. But even as the most selfish person is obliged to hold out some lure to those whom he is out to exploit, so a number of temptations for studying in their institutions have been brought into being by the rulers. Moreover, all members of Government are not alike. There are some liberal-minded among them who will consider the problem of education on merits. Therefore, there is no doubt some good even in the present system. But the

prevailing education is willy nilly put to wrong use, i.e., it is looked upon as a means of earning money and position.

The ancient aphorism, 'Education is that which liberates', is as true today as it was before. Education here does not mean mere spiritual knowledge nor does liberation signify only spiritual liberation after death. Knowledge includes all training that is useful for the service of mankind and liberation means freedom from all manner of servitude even in the present life. Servitude is of two kinds : slavery to domination from outside and to one's own artificial needs. The knowledge acquired in the pursuit of this ideal alone constitutes true study.

Realizing that a form of education devised by foreign rulers could only be calculated to subserve their interests, the Congress accepted in 1920, among other things, the principle of the boycott of all Governmental educational institutions. But that era seems to be over. The demand for entrance to Government institutions and those imparting education on similar lines is increasing faster than the number of such schools and colleges. The ranks of examinees are ever swelling. In spite of this hypnotic spell, however, I hold that true education is what I have defined.

A student who is superficially attracted by the educational ideal set forth by me and leaves his studies is liable to repent of his action later. I have, therefore, suggested a safer course. While continuing his studies in the institution which he has joined he should ever keep before him the ideal of service set forth by me and use his studies with a view to serve that ideal, never for making money. Moreover, he should try to make up the lack in the present education by application of his leisure hours to the ideal. He will, therefore, avail himself to the utmost of whatever opportunity offers for taking part in the constructive programme.

*Harijan*, 10-3-1946.



## AT THE JAMIA MILLIA

Gandhiji had thought of returning to his residence from the Balikashrama. But a number of students and some members of the staff from Jamia Millia came and requested him, some time to pay a visit, to their institution too.

"Some time must mean now," replied Gandhiji. "Having come so far I cannot go back without going to you." The Jamia Millia group were overjoyed. They ran ahead of him to carry the happy tidings to their colleagues and returned with petromax lanterns to lead the way. The unexpected visit put the whole place in a flutter of excitement. Dr. Zakirhussain was away at Bhawalpur. But Moujeebsaheb was there with other members of the staff. Carpets were spread on the lawn and a happy family gathering was held there under the sky. Jamia Millia, founded at the commencement of the non-co-operation movement in 1920 is shortly to celebrate its silver jubilee. The seedling planted by the late Hakim Ajmalkhansahab, Dr. Ansari and the Ali Brothers has grown into a stately tree under the loving care of Dr. Zakirhussain and his colleagues. It has now 200 students attending the primary classes, 100 in the secondary section and 28 in the college. Sixty teachers are besides undergoing training. The institution is running a day school and a *Maktaba* or a publishing house in Karol Bagh.

"I have proved my claim to being a member of the family by coming without previous notice," Gandhiji remarked touched by the spontaneous welcome. He then invited questions.

One student asked, "What can the students do to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity?" It was a question after Gandhiji's heart. "The way is simple," he replied. "Even if all the Hindus turn rowdies and abuse you, you may not cease to regard them as your blood-brothers and vice versa. Is it impossible? No, rather the contrary. And what is possible for the individual is possible for the mass.

"Today the whole atmosphere is poisoned. All kinds of wild rumours are circulated by the Press and are indiscriminately swallowed by the people. Panic results and both Hindus

and Mussulmans forget their humanity and behave towards one another like wild brutes. It behoves man to act decently, irrespective of what the other party might or might not do. If one returns decency for decency, it is a bargain. Even thieves and dacoits do that. There is no merit in it. Humanity disdains to calculate profits and losses. It enjoins on one a unilateral obligation to put up decent behaviour. If all the Hindus listened to my advice, or in the alternative, the Muslims listened to me, there would be peace in India which neither daggers nor *lathis* would be able to shatter. The mischief maker will soon be weary of the sorry business of stabbing, when there is no retaliation or counter provocation. An Unseen Power will arrest his uplifted arm and it will refuse to obey his wicked will. You may throw dust at the sun, it won't dim his lustre. All it needs is to hold one's soul in faith and patience. God is good and does not allow wickedness to proceed beyond a certain length.

"I had a hand in the building up of this institution. It, therefore, gives me much pleasure to be able to pour out my heart before you. I have said the same thing to the Hindus. May yours be a shining example to India and the world."

*Harijan*, 28-4-1946

### THE CULTURAL ASPECT OF EDUCATION \*

I attach far more importance to the cultural aspect of education than to the literary. Culture is the foundation, the primary thing which the girls ought to get from here. It should show in the smallest detail of your conduct and personal behaviour, how you sit, how you walk, how you dress, etc., so that anybody might be able to see at a glance that you are the products of this institution. Inner culture must be reflected in your speech, the way in which you treat visitors and guests, and behave towards one another and your teachers and elders.

I was pleased too that you walked all the distance to and from Bhangi Nivas, when you came to see me. But if you

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\* Talk to the students of the Kasturba Balikashram, New Delhi, on

came only to please me, your trudging had no merit. It will do you no good. You must make it a rule to prefer walking to using a conveyance. Motor car is not for the millions. You will therefore shun it. Millions cannot afford even train journey. Their world is their village. It is a very small thing but if you faithfully adhere to this rule it will transform your entire life and fill it with a sweetness that natural simplicity carries with it.

Education here won't qualify you for luxurious living. I want the Harijan girls here to show such a degree of culture that everybody should feel ashamed to regard them as untouchables. That is the goal of the Harijan Sevak Sangh's activities. This institution should demonstrate to the whole world the heights to which Harijans can rise, if they are freed from the incubus of untouchability and conversely, the sacrilege and inhumanity of the institution of untouchability itself. I look forward to the day when this institution will fill the whole country with its fragrance and become a centre of attraction for girls from near and far.

*Harijan*, 5-5-1946

## FOUNDATIONS OF FREEDOM

Giving a severe castigation to the unruly crowd that had indulged in window smashing and would have smashed in the roof too if they could, Gandhiji remarked that it augured ill for the Independence to come. The Working Committee which was holding its meeting in their city was considering how to win Independence for the people of India in the shortest time. It was not labouring for a change of masters. If the masses wanted to enjoy Independence, they had first to learn the secret of observing voluntary discipline. Otherwise discipline would have to be imposed upon them by the powers that be. That would not be Independence but its negation. Every people got the Government they deserved. If they indulged in hooliganism, so would the Government and its officials in the name of law and order. The result would not be freedom or Independence but a balancing of anarchies, each trying to keep the other in check.

Voluntary discipline was the first requisite of corporate freedom. If the people were well-behaved, the Government officials would become their true servants. Otherwise they would ride on their necks, not without a semblance of justification. During the Boer War he had seen thousands of soldiers perform a noiseless march through a dense, tropical jungle in the middle of the night, in pitch darkness for not even a match-stick was to be struck to light a cigarette, lest it should betray their movements to the enemy. The whole troop formation moved like one man in perfect silence and harmony. The need for discipline for a nation on its march towards Independence was infinitely greater. Without it, *Ramarajya* which meant the kingdom of God on earth would remain an empty dream.

The principal and the management of the Seksaria College had taken a big step in deciding to make the mother tongue the medium of instruction in their college. But the reform would be still-born if they were lazy or if the public did not co-operate.

A fear had been expressed, observed Gandhiji, that the propagation of *Rashtrabhasha* or the national tongue would prove inimical to the provincial languages. That fear was rooted in ignorance. The present step of the Seksaria College was a living refutation of that suspicion. Provincial tongues provided the sure foundation on which the edifice of the national tongue should rest. The two were intended to complement, not supplant each other.

He deprecated the suggestion that it would need a lot of research and preparation to enable them to impart technical education through the medium of the mother tongue. Those who argued like that, were unaware of the rich treasure of expressions and idioms that were buried in the dialects of our villages. In Gandhiji's opinion there was no need to go to Sanskrit or Persian in search for many expressions. He had been in Champaran and he had found that the village folk there, could fully express themselves with ease and without the help of a single foreign expression or idiom. As an illustration of their resourcefulness, he mentioned the word *hava gadi* which they had coined to denote a motor car. He challenged university scholars to coin a more poetic expression than that for a motor car.

One of the speakers had remarked that the reform would mean a saving of at least three years to the alumni of the college. But Gandhiji was of opinion that the saving in time and labour would be even greater. 'Moreover,' he added, 'what they learnt through the mother tongue, they would easily be able to communicate to their mothers and sisters at home and thereby bring the latter into line with themselves. Woman had been described as man's better half. Today there was a hiatus between the thought world of men and women in India, thanks to the intrusion of the foreign medium. Our womenfolk were backward and ignorant with the result that India was today like a patient with paralysis of the better side. India could not realize her full stature unless that handicap was removed.'

*Harijan*, 18-8-1946

## 127

### WHY GO ABROAD ?

An Indian doctor went to America in order to learn Neurosurgery, so that he might return and serve his people here. He has with difficulty secured a seat in the Columbia University and is working as a house surgeon.

He writes to ask me to influence students not to go abroad for the following reasons :

" (a) The amount our poor country spends on sending and training ten students abroad could be better utilized by securing the services of a first-rate professor who could train 40 students as well as equip a laboratory.

" (b) Students who come here acquire basic knowledge in research but do not know how to equip a laboratory on their return home.

" (c) They have no chance of continued work.

" (d) If we have experts brought out, our laboratories will also get perfected."

I have never been an advocate of our students going abroad. My experience tells me that such, on return, find themselves to be square pegs in round holes. That experience is the richest and contributes most to growth which springs from the soil. But today the craze for going abroad has gripped students. May the extract quoted serve as a warning !

*Harijan*, 8-9-1946

## STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES

"There is an attempt today to bring together all the existing students' organizations in a National Convention, to revise the basis of the student movement and to evolve a united national organization of students. What, in your opinion, should be the scope of this new organization? What activities should this students' organization undertake in the new circumstances in the country?"

There is no doubt that there should be one national organization including the Hindus, the Muslims and the others. Students are the makers of the future. They cannot be partitioned. I am sorry to observe that neither the students have thought for themselves nor have the leaders left them to their studies so that they can become good citizens. The rot began with the alien government. We, the inheritors, have not taken the trouble to rectify the errors of the past. Then the different political groups have sought to catch the students as if they were shoals of fish. And stupidly the students have run into the net spread for them.

It is therefore a herculean task for any students' organization to undertake. But there must be a heroic spirit among them who would not shrink from the task. The scope will be to knit them together into one. This they cannot do unless they will learn to steer clear of active politics. A student's duty is to study the various problems that require solution. His time for action comes after he finishes his studies.

"Today students' organizations are more concerned with passing resolutions on political affairs than devoting their energies to the task of national reconstruction. This is partly due to the attempts which political parties have been making to capture the students' organizations for their party purposes. Our present disunity too can be traced to these party politics. We, therefore, want to evolve some method by which we can prevent the repetition of all this party politics and disunity in the proposed National Union of Students. Do you think it is possible for the students' organizations to eschew politics completely? If not, what, in your opinion, is the extent to which students' organizations should interest themselves in politics?"

This question is partly answered above. They must eschew active politics. It is a sign of one-sided growth that all parties

have made use of the student world for their purpose. This was probably inevitable when the purpose of education was to create a race of slaves who would hug their slavery. That part of the business is over, I hope. The students' first business is to think out the education that the children of a free nation should receive. The education of today is obviously not such. I must not go into the question as to what it should be. Only they must not allow themselves to be deceived into the belief that it is the function only of the elders in the university senates. They must stimulate the faculty of thinking. I do not even remotely suggest that the students can force the situation by strikes and the like. They have to create public opinion by offering constructive and enlightened criticism. The senators having been brought up in the old school are slow to move. They can truly be acted upon by enlightenment.

"Today, the majority of students are not interesting themselves in national service. Many of them are cultivating what they consider 'fashionable' western habits, and more and more students are resorting to bad habits like drinking etc. There is little efficiency and little desire for independent thinking. We want to tackle all these problems, and build up character, discipline and efficiency in youth. How do you think we can do it?"

This deals with the present distemper. It will disappear when a calm atmosphere is produced, when the students cease to be agitators and take to sober studies. A student's life has been rightly likened to the life of a *sannyasi*. He must be the embodiment of simple living and high thinking. He must be discipline incarnate. His pleasure is derived from his studies. They do provide real pleasure when study ceases to be a tax the student has to pay. What can be a greater pleasure than that a student marches from knowledge to more knowledge?

*Harijan*, 17-8-1947

## NON-VIOLENCE AND FREE INDIA \*

There was a small gathering of local students the other day in Gandhiji's camp at Beliaghata. Gandhiji first asked them if any of them had taken part in the riots, to which they replied in negative. Whatever they had done was in self-defence ; hence it was no part of the riot.

This gave Gandhiji an opportunity of speaking on some of the vital problems connected with non-violence. He said that mankind had all along tried to justify violence and war in terms of unavoidable self-defence. It was a simple rule that the violence of the aggressor could only be defeated by superior violence of the defender. All over the world, men had thus been caught in a mad race for armaments, and no one yet knew at what point of time the world would be really safe enough for turning the sword into the plough. Mankind, he stated, had not yet mastered the true art of self-defence.

But great teachers, who had practised what they preached, had successfully shown that true defence lay along the path of non-retaliation. It might sound paradoxical ; but this is what he meant. Violence always thrived on counter-violence. The aggressor had always a purpose behind his attack ; he wanted something to be done, some object to be surrendered by the defender. Now, if the defender steeled his heart and was determined not to surrender even one inch, and at the same time to resist the temptation of matching the violence of the aggressor by violence, the latter could be made to realize in a short while that it would not be paying to punish the other party and his will could not be imposed in that way. This would involve suffering. It was this unalloyed self-suffering which was the truest form of self-defence which knew no surrender.

Someone might ask that if through such non-resistance the defender was likely to lose his life, how could it be called a self-defence ? Jesus lost his life on the Cross and the Roman Pilate won. Gandhiji did not agree. Jesus had won, as the

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\* Report of a talk to a gathering of the local students and conversation with Prof. Stuart Nelson at Beliaghata camp.



world's history had abundantly shown. What did it matter if the body was dissolved in the process, so long as by the Christ's act of non-resistance, the forces of good were released in society?

This art of true self-defence by means of which man gained his life by losing it, had been mastered and exemplified in the history of individuals. The method had not been perfected for application by large masses of mankind. India's Satyagraha was a very imperfect experiment in that direction. Hence, during the Hindu-Muslim quarrel it proved a failure on the whole.

Two or three days ago, before this meeting with the students, Gandhiji unburdened his heart, in this respect to Professor Stuart Nelson, who had come to see him before he left for his college in America. Professor Nelson asked him why it was that Indians who had more or less successfully gained Independence through peaceful means, were now unable to check the tide of civil war through the same means? Gandhiji replied that it was indeed a searching question which he must answer. He confessed that it had become clear to him that what he had mistaken for Satyagraha was not Satyagraha but passive resistance—a weapon of the weak. Indians harboured ill-will and anger against their erstwhile rulers, while they pretended to resist them non-violently. Their resistance was, therefore, inspired by violence and not by regard for the man in the British, whom they should convert through Satyagraha.

Now that the British were voluntarily quitting India, apparent non-violence had gone to pieces in a moment. The attitude of violence which we had secretly harboured, in spite of the restraint imposed by the Indian National Congress, now recoiled upon us and made us fly at each other's throats when the question of the distribution of power came up. If India could now discover a way of sublimating the force of violence which had taken a communal turn, and turning it into constructive, peaceful ways, whereby differences of interests could be liquidated, it would be a great day indeed.

Gandhiji then proceeded to say that it was indeed true that many English friends had warned him that the so-called non-violent non-co-operation of India was not really non-violent. It was the passivity of the weak and not the non-violence

of the stout in heart who would never surrender their sense of human unity and brotherhood even in the midst of the conflict of interests, who would ever try to convert and not coerce their adversary.

Gandhiji proceeded to say that this was indeed true. He had all along laboured under an illusion. But he was never sorry for it. He realized that if his vision were not covered by that illusion, India would never have reached the point which it had today.

India was now free, and the reality was now clearly revealed to him. Now that the burden of subjection had been lifted, all the forces of good had to be marshalled in one great effort to build a country which forsook the accustomed method of violence in order to settle human conflicts whether it was between two States or between two sections of the same people. He had yet the faith that India would rise to the occasion and prove to the world that the birth of two new States would be, not a menace, but a blessing to the rest of mankind. It was the duty of Free India to perfect the instrument of non-violence for dissolving collective conflicts, if its freedom was going to be really worth while.

*Harijan*, 31-8-1947

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### ABOUT STUDENTS

A correspondent says :

"You have begun writing in time about the student world of India. Your opinion was highly necessary. The late H. G. Wells has somewhere described the students as 'Undergraduate Intelligence'. The exploitation of the half-baked student world is highly dangerous. It tears the students under exploitation from the essential work of study and its assimilation. In these critical times the harm done by the exploitation of 'Undergraduate Intelligence' recoils upon the exploiters. Your writing referred to above gives rise to one question: Was it not Gandhiji who first drew the students to politics? I know that this is not true. But it is necessary for you to reiterate your position.

"The second thing is: What should students' organizations do? What should be their objective? Today, as you know, students' organizations are considered as stepping stones to entrance into political life. Some exploit them for that purpose."

Only during this week I had the misfortune to experience what harm 'Undergraduate Intelligence' can do. I was invited by the Vice-Chancellor to address a students' gathering. Sad to say, they indulged in a hostile demonstration against Shaheed Saheb. Afterwards they came to reason and they repented. And they gave a demonstration of how half-baked intelligence could do right under wise guidance. This would be apparent from the report of my post-prayer speech in the current issue of the *Harijan*.

Let me hope that the rendering into Gujarati in the columns of the *Harijanbandhu* will be quite in keeping with the original in English. The English rendering is the translation of the speech that was delivered in Hindustani. But it has not been possible to give properly edited Hindustani and its authorized English translation. Who could shoulder that burden? I have deprived myself of the assistance of Pyarelalji and Dr. Sushila Nayyar, who are engaged in better work. Rajkumari's services have been unavailable for several months. Now she has become a Minister.

If there is one compact students' organization, it can become a mighty instrument of service. Their objective can only be one: never for the purpose of finding a lucrative career but fitting themselves for the service of the motherland. If they were to do so, their knowledge would attain a great height. Agitation is only for those who had completed their studies. While studying, the only occupation of students must be to increase their knowledge. The education, as it is prescribed today, is detrimental, conceived in terms of the masses of India. It is possible to show that the present education has been of some use to the country. I regard it as negligible. Let no one be deceived by it. The acid test of its usefulness is this: Does it make, as it should, an effective contribution to the production of food and clothing? What part does the student world play in allaying the present senseless slaughter? All education in a country has got to be demonstrably in promotion of the progress of the country in which it is given. Who will deny that education in India has not served that purpose? Hence, one purpose of the organization should be to discover the defects of the present education and seek to remove them, so far as possible in their own persons. By their correct conduct they

will be able to convert to their view the heads of education. If they do so, they will never be entangled in party politics. In the revised scheme, constructive and creative programme will naturally have its due place. Indirectly, their action will keep the politics of the country free of the spirit of exploitation.

Now for the first question : What I said in the matter of students' education at the time of the country's battle for freedom is evidently forgotten. I did not invite the students to devote themselves to politics whilst they were in schools and colleges. I had inculcated non-violent non-co-operation. I had suggested that they should empty these educational institutions and throw themselves in the battle for freedom. I had encouraged national universities and national schools and colleges. Unfortunately, the trap of the education given in our schools and colleges was too strong for the students. Only a handful were able to disengage themselves from it. Thus, it is not proper to say that I drew the students to the politics of the country. Moreover, when after 20 years of exile in South Africa, I returned to India in 1915, the students, while they were engaged in their studies, had already been drawn to the political life. Probably, there was no other way. Our foreign rulers had so devised the whole life of the country that nobody could engage in politics suitable for the delivery of the country from bondage. The foreign rulers had so devised and controlled the education of the youth of the country that they remained under their control and millions were kept in comparative darkness. This was the way in which foreign control was rendered as permanent as possible. Therefore, apart from the colleges and schools controlled by foreign rulers, patriotic workers were not to be found. To what extent this foreign education was mis-used need not be considered here.

*Harijan, 7-9-1947*

## A PLEA FOR DISCIPLINE

Gandhiji addressed after prayer the students of Calcutta. He said that he had done teaching in his own way from his early youth and probably the very first meeting he addressed after his return to India in 1915 was that of students. Since then he had addressed numerous student-meetings throughout his many wanderings in India. He was not new to them nor were they new to him. But of late years he had ceased to address meetings as he used to do before. He was, therefore, glad that he was able to address the students. Their Vice-Chancellor was good enough to see him about the evening's proceedings. He was nervous about the students' behaviour towards Shaheed Saheb. He said that he would have only the prayer and his usual after-prayer speech. It should not have been so. Everywhere there appeared to be anarchy in the student world. They did not tender obedience to their teachers and their Vice-Chancellor. On the contrary, they expected obedience from their teachers. It was a painful exhibition on the part of those who were to be the future leaders of the nation. They gave an exhibition of unruliness that evening. He was faced with placards in the foreign tongue depicting his comrade Shaheed Saheb in unbecoming language. He suggested to them that inasmuch as they had insulted Shaheed Saheb, they had insulted the speaker. Shaheed Saheb could not be insulted by the language used against him. But the speaker could not take up that attitude. The students should be, above all, humble and correct. They had an object lesson in their Vice-Chancellor. The Chief Minister, Shaheed Saheb and he sat on the platform provided for them but the Vice-Chancellor sat among the rest of the visitors. His humility reminded him of Krishna who, when Raja Yudhishtira performed his *yajna*, chose the menial work of washing the feet of the guests. Thereby he showed his innate nobility. The greatest to remain great had to be the lowliest by choice. If he could speak from his knowledge of Hindu belief, the life of a student was to correspond to the life of a *sannyasi* up to the time his studies ended. He was to be under

the strictest discipline. He could not marry nor indulge in dissipation. He could not indulge in drink and the like. His behaviour was to be a pattern of exemplary self-restraint. Had they lived at all up to the pattern, they would not have done what they did at the prayer meeting.

*Harijan, 7-9-1947*

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## A STUDENT'S PERPLEXITY

Here is an extract from a pupil's letter to his teacher who sends it to me for comment :

"Two things completely possess me: my nationalism and my overbearing carnal passions. These always create seeming contradictions in my behaviour, and inconsistency in my decisions. I want to be the first servant of my country and at the same time enjoy the physical pleasures of the world. I must confess, I do not believe in God although I am sometimes terribly afraid of Him. All existence seems to me to be an enigma. I do not know what awaits me at the end. I have seen dead bodies burning: my mother's was the last, and the scene influenced me terribly. I cannot bear to think that such shall be my fate. I feel sick at the sight of a wound; and to think that my body shall burn one day! I know, there is no escape. To me, there does not seem to be any life beyond. That is why I am afraid.

"There are only two courses open to me: either to brood over it and pine away, or to enjoy the physical pleasures of the world, be lost in them and forget the end. I confess, (I have confessed to you things which I have never confessed to anybody else) that I have chosen the latter course.

"This world is the only reality; its joys are worth having for anything. Feeling for my wife who died recently, was genuine feeling; but that feeling was not because she was dead but because I was left alone. For the dead there are no problems; for the living there are all. I do not believe in any pure love; the so-called love is nothing but sex. If there were anything like pure love, I should have felt more attachment for my parents than for my wife; but reverse was the case. I have been a loyal husband but I could not have assured my wife that I would feel for her even after her death. My feeling would perhaps arise from the inconvenience that her passing might cause me. You might call this cynicism but there it is....Please write to me and guide me."

This extract covers three things: (1) Conflict between carnal desire and nationalism, (2) God and future life, and (3) Undeified love and sex.

The first is well stated. Carnal desire was the reality, nationalism was the fashion of the day. Nationalism in the sense of power politics is quite consistent with satisfaction of carnal desire. Instances from life can be multiplied. I have in mind nationalism in the sense of a burning love for the nation including 'this last'. It must burn as it always has burnt carnal desire and the like. Thus there is no conflict but always victory of the latter over the former. All-embracing love of the nation leaves not a minute for any occupation that interferes with that ruling pursuit. He is lost who is possessed by carnal desire.

Uncertain faith in God and the future springs from the lust for life. This lust unhinges a man or a woman. Indecision consumes him or her. Faith in God will live when the animal passion dies. The two cannot co-exist.

The third enigma is a mere restatement of the first. Undefined love between husband and wife takes one nearer God than any other love. When sex is mixed with undefined love, it takes one away from one's Maker. Hence, if there be no sex consciousness and sexual contact, it is a question whether there is any occasion for marriage. The pupil truly says that there was no unselfish love felt for his wife. Had it been unselfish, death of life's partner would have enriched life for, the memory of the disembodied partner would have resulted in greater dedication to the service of down-trodden humanity.

*Harijan*, 19-10-1947

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